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*American*

# QUILTS AND COVERLETS

*A history of a charming native art together with  
a manual of instruction for beginners, by*

FLORENCE PETO

*With*

*fifty-six reproductions in  
color and monochrome &*

*fifty patterns  
and diagrams*

*in line*



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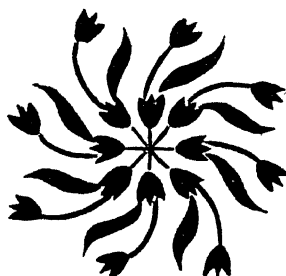
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*Wind-blown Tulips*

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Frontispiece

CREWELWORK SPREAD

*By courtesy of Brooklyn Museum*



Plate II

TREE OF LIFE

*From the Author's Collection*



Plate III

MARINER'S COMPASS

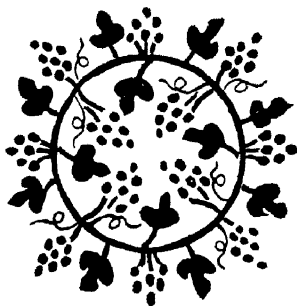
*From the Author's Collection*



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*By courtesy of the Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, N.Y*



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*These illustrations, and the explanatory diagrams, are from drawings by the Author*

## Foreword



PATCHWORK IS AS OLD AS MAN'S NECESSITY FOR PATCHES. NEEDS must, the humble peasant sewed one application of cloth over another or fitted a shaped piece into a threadbare space in his clothing. The difference between the two techniques as used in making the ornamental top to a quilt is very simple. In appliqué work patches are applied with hemming stitches to a background to form free-flowing, usually floral, design; in pieced work patches are joined together by seaming and a geometrical composition evolves. There are quiltmakers who argue hotly over which of the two methods is the older, which the more difficult and which the more beautiful. Wherever there was a scarcity of material thrifty housewives considered appliqué work extravagant; the method, however, was greatly admired and the most cautious planner usually produced one quilt with "laid on" patches. In Europe in early days appliqué rose to a high estate as ornamentation on princely habiliments, priestly vestments, church appurtenances and the banners of the Crusaders.

Quilting, a separate art, was born of the need felt alike by rich and poor to protect home and person from bitter cold; it was based on the simple fact that three layers of cloth are warmer than one. Stitchery held the three layers together, and garments made in the technique were worn while curtains employing the same process of manufacture were hung at doorways and windows to intercept draughts. Quilting, like patchwork, first practised by the peasantry, became an art in which queens, ladies of the courts and members of the nobility strove to excel. The two needlework arts as employed together on one article are exemplified by the American-made quilts and spreads shown in this volume. Still another skill, that of embroidering in silk, cotton roving (candlewicking), or

wool, sometimes furnished the entire decoration of a bedspread or often was extra embellishment to a pieced or an appliqué'd item. In this country quilts were made to supply a basic need; none could be bought in shops. The important quilting era in America extended from 1750 to 1860. There are few remaining examples made earlier than the first date but the art still is being carried on in many sections of the United States and Canada. The urgency is past but the fascination of collecting early examples of the craft, or of creating new ones in the traditional patterns, lives on. Museums, historical organizations and societies for the preservation of American antiquities have expended effort and have exercised discernment in adding items of significance to their permanent collections, which then are made available to the public for study and enjoyment. Quilts appear annually in many city antique shows and also in state and county fairs, where they compete for prizes along with other examples of the homestead arts. Magazines on antiques publish from time to time rare examples of needlecraft; women's magazines display quilts in all the glamor of colored photography, offering prepared patterns to encourage reproductions by those who will accept the challenge: your ancestress could do it—how about you?

The spreads in this book have been presented in chronologic order of their making, as nearly as may be determined. Thus it may be seen how styles in design, techniques of sewing, and individual taste developed with the years.

FLORENCE PETO

*Part one*



HISTORICAL QUILTS  
AND COVERLETS



## Chapter one

1748 to 1800

EXCLUDING THE GREAT MANSIONS OCCUPIED BY THE COLONIAL governors in eighteenth-century America, the home of the average citizen was small and his family large. There rarely were more than one or two bedrooms and often a bed was an article of parlor furniture. Wealthy Nicholas Van Rensselaer of Albany owned but two beds plus a built-in sleeping-bank, according to the published list of his household effects at his death in 1695. To account for the great diversity in sizes of the earliest examples of American bedcovers, the bedstead of the period must be considered. Important articles of furniture were made to order by journeymen cabinetmakers according to individual tastes and needs; many four-post beds were only four feet wide; extra width was charged for at the rate of two pence per inch and a man's wealth and standing in the community were measured by the width of his bed as well as the richness of its carving. There were field beds, low four-posters, wide and high four-posters and the "slawbank" or built-in bed which was a feature in the homes of the early Dutch settlers in New York State and New Jersey. When there was a wide and high four-poster, father, mother, and the youngest infants slept in it; other children were tucked in the trundle bed, which in the daytime was pushed under the big bed; still others slept on feather beds arranged on settles, and servants were satisfied with straw pallets spread on the floor. Neatness was attained in the morning by piling all the extra feather beds and pillows onto the mother bed and it took a counterpane of noble proportions to cover all! Frequently a valance which matched draperies and curtains was shirred on a cord running around the bed; then only a small counterpane was required to cover the top.



Throughout the years, to furnish bed-draperies, woolen coverlets, quilts, sheets and other linens for her household was woman's job. Men dominated in all other fields—art, crafts, politics and management; needlecraft alone belonged peculiarly to women. From flax grown and sheep raised on the home plantations, they spun the thread, dyed the yarn and wove it into materials both coarse and sheer to be used for domestic purposes. From England, Wales, Holland and other continental countries women had brought to their new homes sturdy hearts, dextrous hands and the memory of colors and forms that had been part of the Old World culture; it guided their taste in decorative stitchery. In cities and near large settlements there were expensive schools for young gentlewomen which advertised instruction in “all sorts of fine needlework, Turkey-work, quilting, and embroidering in a new way”; for the most part the average housewife followed her own inclinations, achieving vigor in her handwork and, with surprising frequency, a delicacy and charm which must have been the result of fine feeling rather than formal instruction. It was a generation-to-generation affair; mothers taught daughters and it was required that every female of tender years and decent upbringing learn to spin and do a “daily stint” with the needle. The process did not always produce an artist but every woman acquired facility with thimble, thread and needle.

The reason for the generally good condition of the few spreads which have survived from Revolutionary or pre-Revolutionary times is that they were the “best” quilts and counterpanes, had been used only on festive occasions and had been lovingly cared for between times. Often when the best counterpane was on the bed in the homestead's guest chamber, the shades were tightly drawn so the sun could fade neither the bedcover nor the carpet. A “best” quilt would have been fashioned from new and sturdy materials—homespun, hand-printed linen, English chintzes and calicoes; it would have been the bride's quilt and on it would have been expended the finest workmanship of which the maker was capable. It was a poor or lazy girl who did not have at least fourteen quilts to her credit at the time some young man took notice of her, quilt tops she would

have been piecing from the time she was a tiny child. The English kings, George II and George III, had done their very best by embargo and by tax to restrict and forbid in the Colonies the use of the new, soft-textured cotton prints which had been brought from Calcutta to England and which both English and American women admired and coveted for clothing and for household use. Scrap bags with treasured bits of the new calico hung on every doorknob but, handsome as the material was, the reliable indigo barrel still stood beside every kitchen door. Linsey/woolsey, the household staple, strictly a home product, was stiff in texture and limited in color but when dyed a rich dark blue, quilts of this material were practical and almost imperishable—but they were not gay. Two layers, one of blue and another of buff, enclosed an interlining of softest wool; the whole was held together with quilting done in loosely spun linen thread. Quilts of this type survive and are in American museum collections.

There is a rare type of bedspread known as the wool-on-wool coverlet, one of the most interesting though least known of the early hand-made products. To date a little over a dozen of them have come to light. Homer Eaton Keyes, late editor of the magazine *Antiques*, wrote of these as follows:

"My first meeting with a wool-on-wool bedcover was in the year 1923 when I was introduced to a bisected specimen (dated 1774) which had long been preserved in Chelsea, Vermont, by the simple device of utilization as a padding for a carpet. When the carpet wore out, the bedcover was revealed, rescued and reassembled. For some time I thought this remarkable example of domestic embroidery might be unique. Of course it was not. While no two of these coverlets have displayed precisely the same pattern, all have exhibited similar large-scrolled motifs worked with heavy wool yarn on a ground of wool blanketing. Initials and date often appear in the upper part of the design. The technique employed is hooking or a combination of hooking and coarse needlework. With so few exceptions these coverlets have been found in or near the Connecticut River Valley as to justify the assumption that the type originated among the womenfolk of the Connecticut Colony."



*Dablia Wreath*



Since that editorial several specimens have been discovered. The earliest available history of the pictured example (Plate 1) dates back to its purchase in Utica; this does not mean that it was made there, but Mr. Keyes had told the author he felt something of their influence had been carried over from New England to rural communities in New York State. Initialed and dated "F.B. 1748," this coverlet seems to be second in point of age—the earliest recorded so far bears a date of 1724. On these earliest covers the entire surface has been covered with home-dyed wool yarn left in deep pile; the colors on the example illustrated are tawny yellows and tones of brown set off against a shaded blue background.



*Rose of Sharon*

During the Revolution when men were at war, women took over the job of dyeing and in spite of what sounds today like carefree directions, became expert at it. It is a wonder any yarn or cloth came out twice the same way. It probably did not. Old-time recipes contain a recurring phrase. The dyer was directed to boil well, stir, dip, air, add a "little" of this and a "handfull" of that—"to suit your fancy." Homespun dyed in the process known as "blue resist," one of the oldest known styles of applying pattern to cloth, was used to decorate the spread on the Dutch-style built-in bed of the Schenck House now in Brooklyn Museum (Plate 2a). There were several resist processes. The one easiest to understand consisted of applying to fabrics, in desired patterns, a gum or paste which had the property of resisting dye; when the treated cloth emerged from the dye bath, either the background of the design or the design itself (according to which had received the application of paste) came out white or whatever color the cloth originally had been. The pictured example, handsome in design and rich in color, was made by Catherine Schuyler and is one of those for which the Hudson River Valley is justly famous; it certainly is the result of no casual prescription.

Another type of "whole cloth" spread which followed the hand-blocked linens and chintzes were the ones made of textiles printed by means of engraved copperplate cylinders. The material was called *toile de Jouy* after the place of its origin in France about 1797; the earliest were



monotones—pink, blue, brown and puce, on white. The designs were pastoral, historical and mythological with many that showed opulent bird and flower groupings. “Complete suits of bed-curtains, bed-cover, canopy-top, window draperies and chair covers” of pink-on-white toile in Georgian pattern (Plate 2b) were in the inventory of household effects of one Jeremiah Miller of Sagaponack, Long Island. The house in which they had been used was built for David Hedges in 1775 and the items still are in the possession of a descendant. Only the well-to-do were able to buy such fabrics in yardages that decorated whole rooms so lavishly.

Seamen and traders brought home to their families in America cotton prints, palampores, glorious in form and color, also precious shawls from India; these were the source from which many quilt designs sprung—the Persian pear, the pomegranate, the tree of life. The white candlewick spread, Plate 3, shows obvious Eastern influence in its tree of life arrangement with characteristic unbroken line to which each flower, fruit and leaf is attached; in Oriental art this symbolized the life eternal. In planning the decoration for any white spread, whether the process involved quilting, tufting, or embroidering with candlewicking, there was a demand on the imagination as well as skill, for without the aid of color, form became doubly important; it took dexterity to adapt the selected design to fit the space to be covered and it also required a nice instinct for balance. Remained then only hours, days, weeks and months of eye-straining, meticulous stitchery. Preachers extolled the woman who rose early and toiled late, thundering the warning: “Satan finds work for idle hands to do!” Where were the idle hands? On the pictured spread the foundation in three widths is fine cotton cloth woven in the small, bird’s-eye diaper pattern; the roving or candlewicking with which the decoration has been done is in two weights. Bullion and French knots, chain and stem, satin and seed, buttonhole and brick stitches contribute variety and interest; a four-inch hand-knotted fringe edges three sides. Two leaves entwined and shaped like hearts at the

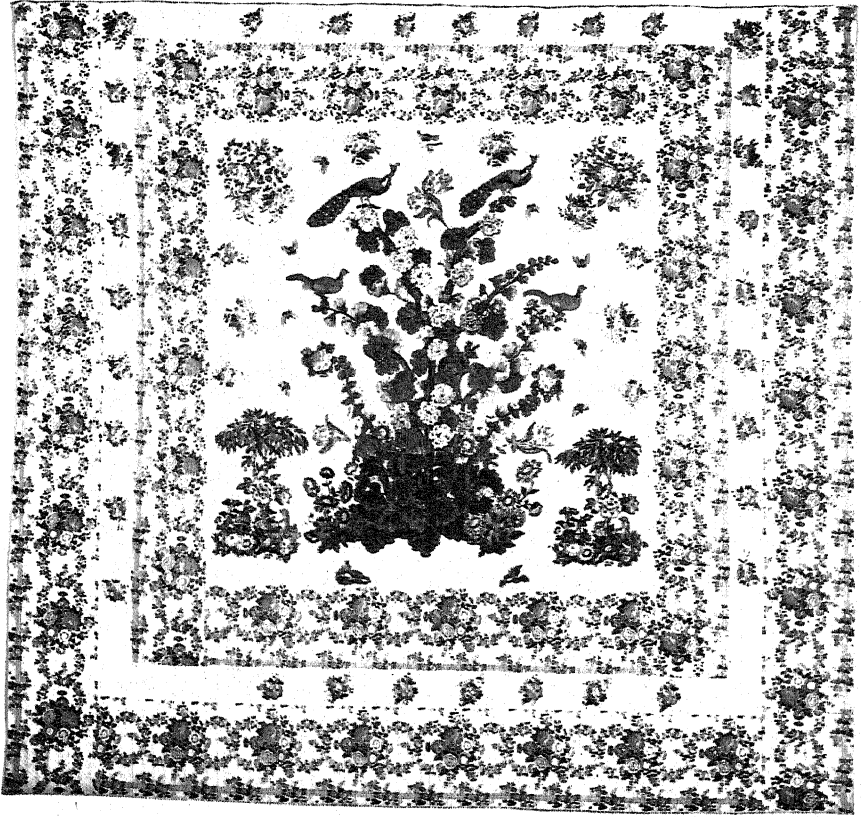


*Tea Rose*

top suggest the marriage spread. This lovely old cover originated in New Jersey and as it lay in a trunk in an attic, a century rolled by and almost another; it acquired a deep ivory tone and lost the identity of its creator, the fate of many an heirloom quilt.

Another orphan of the eighteenth century is fashioned of heavy homespun linen, age-stained. The face of this large spread alternates a simple pink and white pieced "pin-wheel" square with one of linen, the hand-blocked floral pattern of which almost has disappeared. The decoration on the reverse side (Plate 4) makes this item both unique and important; the method of application stimulates speculation. First glance suggests stenciled design but it is thought more likely to have been decorated with a set of hand-printing blocks. The dye used is blue-green and soft rose; it has not bled into the fabric at any point. The outlines are clear and fine, with few areas of solid color; shading is accomplished by hatching, in delicate parallel lines. Narrow borders show overlapping of the pattern but the outer border of plants in pots is evenly spaced and the corners, often an embarrassment to a quilt planner, are well handled. The peacock was a well loved device of craftsmen in eastern Pennsylvania; the "peacock eye" central motif and the feathery green leaves with rose-tinted mid-ribs resemble the proud bird's tail ornamentation. This extremely interesting quilt was acquired in York, Pennsylvania, where it originated.

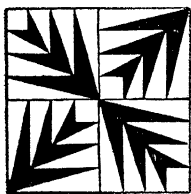
It is a lucky collector who can secure a crewel-embroidered bedcover; their numbers are few and the price is high. Crewel work was done usually on natural colored twill or linen with tapestry wools dyed in a rhapsody of glorious colors. The dominant motif was the tree of life though the original form underwent modification at the hands of English and Colonial needlewomen. The extravaganza of floral forms—acanthus leaves, pomegranates, roses, carnations, seed-pods, grapes, berries, birds, beasts and insects, wrought in a bewildering variety of stitches—usually sprang from a ground base ("terra firma") and were linked together by vine-like tendrils or were depicted all growing or perching on the same tree. Such a tree as never was! A member of the Latimer family in 1772 made the spread shown on the four-post bed in the Brooklyn Museum's Corbin



TREE OF LIFE

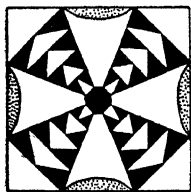
*This Charleston, S.C., spread is nearly four yards wide and was planned for an extremely high four-post bed. The appliqué'd "tree" is built up of motifs cut from a glazed English chintz. Borders of chintz enclose applied, cut-out floral sprays and butterflies*





House (Frontispiece); the treasure was saved when New London was burned by the British in 1781. The pattern is broken up in scattered units after the English style but the open spaces give a delicacy to the composition which has greater appeal to many than the more florid, crowded arrangements. Traditional colors include several shades of green from gray to blue; warm chestnut brown to yellow; blues, indigo to gray; soft, dull reds. They were applied with gay inconsequence and happy disregard for nature; a flower could be brown and a little rabbit could be blue with delightful effect.

It will be noticed that the earliest spreads were planned with regard to the design as a whole unit, as distinguished from patterns in repeat; on a prepared background the work proceeded from the center, which usually was a medallion, and extended to the outer edges; sometimes the composition was a succession of borders framing a central motif. Spreads done in this manner were cumbersome to handle and often were referred to as a "lapful." A graceful, early example is shown in Plate 5. A Huguenot refugee from the Palatinate, John Conrad Frick, sailed with his wife Barbara from Rotterdam on the ship *Pennsylvania* in 1732 and became one of the original settlers and founders of Germantown, Pennsylvania. His son Peter, born in 1743, took an active part in the Revolution; he married Barbara, daughter of Dr. John Breidenhart, and settled in Baltimore Town. It is not known in the family whether the first Barbara Frick made the spread but it is more likely to have been the second at some time during the Revolutionary period. It is still owned by a descendant at Easton, Maryland. The central spray is of cut-out glazed chintz in rose, pink, lavender and brown and is framed by a circular sawtooth border. A closely and finely quilted space is in turn enclosed



*Dusty Miller*

by a bow-knot and swag border of turquoise blue dotted white. The serpentine floriated vine is made of cut-out chintz motifs applied in the early technique of "reverse appliqué," which means the background has been felled over the patch instead of the patch being felled onto the background—in other words, an inlay. The edging

saw-tooth border is dark blue patterned in white, making the prevailing color scheme blue and rose; a hand-knotted fringe matches the coffee and cream richness of the homespun foundation.

A quilt made by Sophonisba Angasiola Peale (Plate 6a) has a pieced eight-point star as a central medallion surrounded by six pieced borders in varying widths—Wild Goose Chase and Chained Squares. The calicoes are thought to be prints by John Hewson, the English textile manufacturer who came to Philadelphia and operated one of the first weaving, dyeing and printing establishments in America. He served on the patriot side during the Revolution and the British put a price on his head—the mother country had not taken kindly to the defection of her skilled craftsmen! Sophonisba manipulated a zig-zag patterned print to give the star a scintillant effect; appliqué'd baskets of fruit adorn corners and sides of the Wild Goose Chase border. Born in 1781, the quiltmaker was sister of Rembrandt Peale and tenth child of Charles Willson Peale who had married three times and fathered eighteen children. Rembrandt painted not only all the American celebrities of the day but is said to have done forty-seven portraits of General Washington who, though he hated doing so, sat patiently many hours for both father and son. Two of the Peale daughters achieved recognition for artistic ability but of Sophonisba it is known only that she made the quilt.

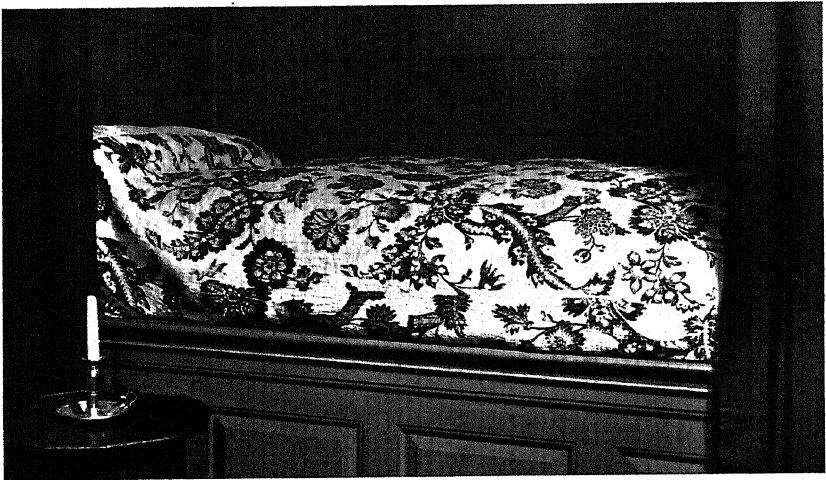
Lovely effects have been attained on eighteenth-century spreads by cutting motifs from intricately patterned chintzes, and needlewomen who took pride in their skill never did things the easy way. With sharp scissors they cut close to the design, in and out; bouquets, garlands, sprigs, birds, were so disposed they formed a picture for the finished work. About the turn of the century a young bride of the Barnes-Dickens family came from England and brought a quilt top of the type with her which she intended to finish in her new home (Plate 6b). Because of some unknown personal misfortune the English bride never finished her spread; a generation later someone with sentiment enough to finish it but with an eye to a short cut, fastened the layers together with blue and white cotton thread tied in small bows. The result is not unpleasing but the needlewoman who had labored so painstakingly over the delicately lovely top never would have



WOOL-ON-WOOL COVERLET

*One of the few hooked, wool-on-wool bedcovers; the second oldest so far recorded.  
The type appears to have originated in the Connecticut Valley*





a) BLUE RESIST BEDCOVER

*A skillfully dyed "blue resist" quilt, credited to the Hudson River Valley, decorates a Dutch, built-in bed*



b) PINK-ON-WHITE PRINTED LINEN

*Detail from material which is typical of the handsome fabrics that were used in making bedcovers, bed-curtains and draperies for Colonial homes of some pretensions*

been contented with anything less than exquisite quilting. A diagonal frame of striped blue and rose glazed chintz encloses the central group and a five-inch-wide band of dark blue sprigged with yellow and white daisies borders the edge; blue, brown, yellow and several shades of rose are charming against the deep cream background.

It is not surprising that by 1800 women more and more favored the convenient method of making a quilt in unit blocks and setting them together with strips or lattice-work or with alternate white blocks. In an elaborate red and white (the red aged to an indescribable rose) appliqué'd spread, unit squares have been set diagonally and joined by three-inch-wide strips decorated with appliqué'd Chained Loops. Saw-tooth patch borders enclose the wide, undulating leafy vine, which is the outer frame (Plate 7). It is superlative workmanship in minute detail which places this item in the "blue ribbon" class; it won first prize at the exhibition of antique quilts shown in Springfield, Massachusetts, by the Connecticut Valley Historical Society in 1946. Infinitesimal stitches are so evenly spaced in the quilting, it rivals machine precision. It is said that whenever a woman of olden time began so tedious and complicated a piece of work she invariably began another quilt at the same time—the second for relaxation! A quilt of this order demanded daylight, but simpler patterns with less fine stitchery could be done by candlelight—no precious time wasted. Though there is no available history to this item, the lace-like quilting suggests southern origin. An abundance of cotton seeds, apparent in the interlining when the quilt is held up to the light, seems to refute this. Southern women had their Negro slaves pick seeds out of cotton and nothing but hand-picked padding went into a best quilt made south of the Mason and Dixon line. There were regional customs and superstitions pertaining to brides' quilts and the presence of hearts and doves on this one proclaims a marriage spread. A heart is the universal symbol of love, and the dove, in the early 1800's, was the symbol of femininity and conjugal felicity. It was good luck when the bridegroom-to-be, gifted with pencil or not, could be persuaded to draw an original design for the quilting stitchery on his sweetheart's bridal spread; it gave the finished article a very special appeal for that bride. Pineapple designs were considered lucky;

they portended many friends to whom hospitality would be extended. A whirling swastika must be tucked somewhere in the quilting stitchery for it insured good fortune and fertility. In some communities it was bad luck for a bride-to-be to do any of the quilting on her bride's quilt, and it was extremely unlucky for a girl who had not yet been "spoken for" to put hearts on a quilt before her engagement had been announced. No good would come of such forward behavior, certainly not a husband. But Mary Jane Darling, spirited daughter of Captain James Darling of Smithtown, Long Island, flew in the teeth of the convention. The captain, about to depart on a long sea voyage, drew a complex nautical design and told his young daughter if she would make a quilt after the pattern, be a good girl and help her mother during his absence, he would bring her a black silk dress from China on his return. Mary Jane made the quilt but onto her father's masculine conception she defiantly scattered hearts, her own idea of what the pattern needed! In Mary Jane's case the jinx failed to work, for family history says she was married before the Captain's return and lived happily ever after. No news of the black silk dress.



*Whirling Swastika*

## Chapter two



1800 to 1840

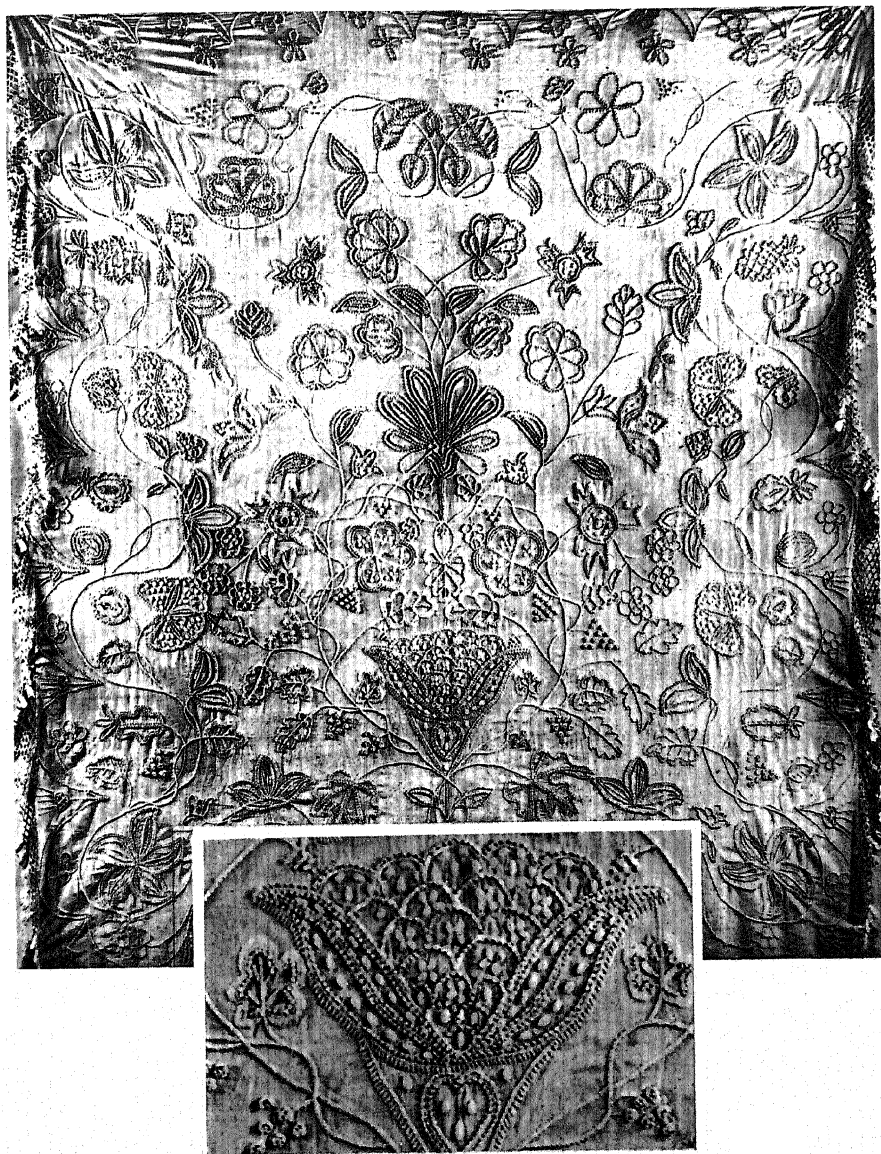
IT IS NOT WISE TO BE DIDACTIC ABOUT THE NOMENCLATURE OF quilt patterns. Eighteenth-century designs rarely had individual names but hundreds of whimsical and fantastic titles were given to those unit patterns which, assembled in repeat, became so popular later. The names reflected political enthusiasms, regional folklore and religious feelings; they were subject to change as they migrated or as current events captured the imagination of the quiltmakers. Rocky Glen in the mountains became Little Lost Ship on the coast and Kansas Troubles later in its history. Job's Tears in religious-minded New England became Texas Tears during the stormy debates in Congress about the advisability of admitting another slave state to the Union. The name the quiltmaker called her quilt is a clue to help date it and locate the place of its making. A simple eight-point star, known to old-time pieceworkers as the Variable Star, suddenly sprang into amazing popularity when rechristened Old Tippecanoe and Tyler Too—the campaign slogan of that doughty old “cider barrel and log cabin” hero and frontier fighter, William Henry Harrison. Harrison became ninth President of the United States in 1840 during one of the most colorful periods in American history; after all the excitement and final triumph, he died one month after entering office. Women may not have had suffrage but they were aware of and alert to the political issues of their day. Lincoln's Platform is said to have been made during the famous Lincoln-Douglas debates in Illinois, and the opposition was not caught napping: they produced The Little Giant to honor Stephen Douglas, short of stature but dynamic in spirit.

Mary Totten of Staten Island, New York, born in 1781, willed her Rising Sun quilt (Plate 8) to her niece, and many other wills have recorded

legacy quilts by name. Mary's Rising Sun, a truly magnificent piece of work, employs elaborate appliqué of cut-out chintz motifs together with blossoms, buds and stemming of calico; buds and the two chained-bud borders are done in the rare "reverse appliqué" described before. Colors rival those in a Persian rug: dark greens, plum, crimson and wine reds, rose-beige, light and dark blues and gold.

The same pieced composition, made in Baltimore about 1820, was called the Star of Bethlehem (Plate 9). The formation of an eight-point star leaves four corners and four right-angles on which may be placed complementary decoration; often this was quilting stitchery. On the pictured spread pieced stars and half stars fill the spaces; textiles are French and English cotton prints combined with finely woven homespun, and the quilting has been done in homespun linen thread. Subdued tones of brown, yellow, rose, tan and blue prevail; a border of unglazed chintz in chocolate brown patterned in yellow frames the picture. A sharp divergence in an otherwise perfect harmony of color happens in one right-angled space where an orange material flowered in bright blue surprises the beholder! The artifice was deliberate and not the expedience of a quiltmaker who had run out of matching material. In certain localities superstitious quiltmakers tried in this way to divert the "evil eye" which otherwise might be cast jealously on human endeavor; it was analogous to the Oriental idea that to make a perfect thing is to imitate the Deity, therefore unlucky and presumptuous.

Judging from the number of quilts showing the diagonal arrangement of pieced squares known to quiltmakers as the Irish Chain, it was a dearly loved pattern over a long period of years. Plate 10a is an interesting early example. It is signed and dated: Ann Maria Warner, 1822. Wine reds, dark blue and blue-green calicoes comprise the "chain" onto whose open spaces (which offered opportunity for a variety of decoration) have been appliqué'd motifs cut from scenic toiles and chintzes; these alternate with nosegays fashioned of floral chintz and small-patterned calicoes. The background material is homespun. There were double and triple Irish Chains and the pattern was made in the Colonies and in the young states both north and south.



EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CANDLEWICK SPREAD

*A tufted spread, showing Eastern influence in its design. The decoration (done with candlewicking) employs a variety of stitches on a background of fine bird's-eye cotton*



HAND-DECORATED SPREAD

*The reverse side of a rare, homespun, linen quilt from York, Pennsylvania.*

*The ornamentation gives the effect of pen-work, and appears to have been applied by means of hand-printing blocks*

Also prized are the all-white spreads which look so elegant and patrician when they grace a gleaming bedstead of old mahogany. The loom-made tufted type used candlewicking for the warp of the foundation and this heavy yarn at the same time supplied the characteristic "popcorn" decoration. There were two processes, both laborious. When both foundation and tufting were made on the loom, the roving was picked up in loops over wires where the knots or "popcorns" were required for the often complicated design; this process shows a smooth reverse side. The second process used a loomed base, still employing candlewicking which made the same ribbed foundation, but the decoration was done by hand. Instead of wires, the hand-worker sometimes used turkey-wing bones to hold the knots in place while the roving was looped over and drawn through; the bones were removed easily as the work progressed. This process shows threads on the reverse side as in other embroideries and it makes an even weightier spread. Both types belong to the first quarter of the nineteenth century and usually are initialed and dated. There is no history to the handmade example, Plate 10b, but hearts forming the loops on the large swag border and the heart units forming the rosettes proclaim this a bride's spread. It is signed and dated: Martha Freeman, 1823.

"How long did it take to make?" A question heard so often! In two shield-shaped reserves Jane Voorhees gave an answer to possible wonderment over her masterpiece—her name and the dates: 1830–1831. The inference is that Jane was as industrious as she was gifted and made her spread in one year. It looks like the labor of a lifetime (Plate 11). Corded quilts of this kind were made in England and Wales in the seventeenth century, though the technique is older even than that. This spread is in two layers, a fine cambric for the face and a coarser weave for the backing. Running stitches one-quarter of an inch apart form channels through which candlewicking has been run with a bodkin or tapestry needle, extending in parallel lines from the central medallion to the petal border; the roving is snipped off on the wrong side wherever it meets the main design. This ribbing makes a background for the padded floral motifs. Padding or "stuffing" was done by working from the back, separating the threads of the backing material with a bone stiletto and



introducing small bits of cotton through the opening thus made; the process is repeated until each flower, leaf and stem stands out in high relief from the corded background. This spread formerly was in the collection of Mrs. J. Amory Haskell Jr., and much of her famous Americana came from Long Island and New Jersey. The Voorhees ancestry is happily known and the first Colonial ancestor of that name came over in the *Spotted Cow* and settled in Flatlands, Long Island. Jane probably was sister or cousin of Stephen Voorhees who married Johanna Bergen in Flatlands in 1825.

Contemporary with the Jane Voorhees spread is one of the valued all-white, all-quilted type, made near New Hope, Pennsylvania (Plate 12). White spreads were not limited to specific localities but have had their origins in New England, New York State, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and in many states of the southland. Always made to serve as a counterpane, the interlining was spread thin to allow for the finest and most elaborate decoration; none but experienced quilters undertook the exacting task though mistresses of the art, who had served an apprenticeship on simpler work, vied with each other to produce a white masterpiece. On the New Hope spread spaces between the central medallion and the "field," and again just inside the outer border, are so closely quilted in convoluted lines that a stippled effect matts the exotic fruit and flower design. No known history of this example survives.

From Charleston, South Carolina, comes the Tree of Life, Plate II. It is signed and dated: Sarah F. C. H. Miller, 1830. Chintz printed with lush foliage and vibrant with a garden's wealth of full-blown beauty went into the making. Women near the coastal towns, north or south, had access at this time to fine, decorated cotton fabrics which America was not yet manufacturing. "Sis Sally," as she was known to her intimates, was sister of Dr. Miller who was minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston; unmarried, she made her home with her brother and worked out a variation of the tree of life for the bed in the guest room of the manse. The spread is four yards wide and it covered a four-poster so high there were mahogany steps that enabled overnight guests to climb into the towering roost! From a foliage base the "tree" is built up of



THE BARBARA FRICK SPREAD

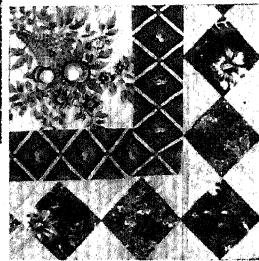
*An outstandingly beautiful applique'd spread with well-disposed decoration.*

*It was made during the Revolutionary period*



*The design (a central medallion surrounded by borders) is typical of an early phase. This spread was made by one of the daughters in the gifted family of Charles Willson Peale*

a) THE SOPHONISBA  
PEALE QUILT



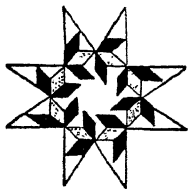
b) CUT-OUT APPLIQUÉ

*With floral chintz, and sharp scissors, artistic combinations were assembled from cut-out sprays, blossoms, birds and butterflies, and mounted on linen or homespun backgrounds*

branches bearing luxurious flowers; peacocks teeter precariously on insubstantial perches but anything can happen on an old-time quilt design! There are scattered applied bouquets, bird groups and hovering butterflies, the whole bordered with a rose and blue glazed chintz; superb half-inch diamond quilting textures a background creamed with age.

An uncommon, indeed rare, type of bedcover displays decoration done by stencil. The few examples which have been discovered have vague or incomplete histories but appear to have had their origins in New York State and in Vermont. All show floral and more or less related designs. The pictured spread, Plate 13, has been made in two layers and it has not been quilted. The decoration is a repeat of formal flower clusters in red, green, and orange-yellow, on a background of age-mellowed cambric. The date is *c.* 1830. A spread of the same type which is in the collection of the New York Historical Society shows the entire surface covered with stylized, five-petaled blossoms entwined with a meandering vine of ivy leaves; this example has been interlined and quilting follows the curves of the pattern. Colors are pastel blues, rose, yellow and green; the petals, deep blue at the edges, fade gradually to pale blue at their bases. Shaded portions on this particular stenciled spread achieve the free effect of hand-painting. The technique has charm but the irregularities which appear on each of these two specimens would seem to indicate amateur or homestead work; a professional would have gauged his pattern better to fit allotted spaces and by so doing he would have lost something of the spread's naïve appeal.

Illustrative of the type of appliqué quilt made for or by brides in and around the city of Baltimore is one shown in Plate 14. Encircled by the Cherry Wreath is a quilted heart and the date 1833. This quilt is early for its type. A few years later it became the vogue for each friend of a prospective bride to make a patchwork square and sign it; these would be assembled into a quilt and very likely quilted at a community quilting party. If the house was large enough more than one quilt was put into the frames and the quilting went on all day; when one woman tired there was always another to take her place. It was a social asset to be a good quilter and the penalty for not being one was no invitations. Two elderly



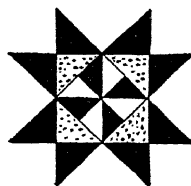
sisters who lived in a rural New York community in the 1850's were expert needlewomen and made many quilts. Socially inclined, they invited the neighbors to quilting parties but after each session they scrutinized the work with eagle eyes. It is related of them that one time, dissatisfied beyond bearing, they closed the blinds and locked the doors and made believe they were not at home, so no caller would have her feelings hurt; out came all the quilting that eight women had spent a day happily stitching and together the sisters did the work all over again! The Baltimore Bride's Quilt is the work of one needlewoman, for sewing, like penmanship, reveals peculiarities and the stitching on this example is too uniform ever to have been done by many hands. Many times quilts were "put in" and "taken out" (of the frames) in one quilting party, but the "best" quilts were not whisked to perfection with any such expedition. A white ribbon (third prize) was awarded this spread at the same exhibition where the Bride's Quilt, shown in Plate 7, took the blue ribbon. In several of the lovely floral blocks may be noticed the intentional divergence of color that was evidenced in the Star of Bethlehem, Plate 9; here in less conspicuous manner blue leaves occasionally are substituted for green ones, upsetting a balanced color scheme though the small sacrifice to absolute perfection may have thwarted an evil spirit! If there are chuckles at these old-time superstitions, be sure to chuckle the next time wood is knocked while bragging of good health or when fingers are crossed while telling of the good behavior of Junior!

Devotees of pieced work will appreciate the dexterity displayed in assembling both the Mariner's Compass, Plate III, and the Pincushion, Plate 15a. All geometric piecing demanded neatness, with even and well-defined points and angles; to assure accuracy small patches that went into the making of mosaics or any pattern with long, slender points, were basted to a paper lining, a narrow margin was folded over the paper and then, with two edges held together, the seam was whipped with tiny over-and-over stitches. Nine circular "compass" units have been set into properly shaped muslin pieces to make the Mariner's



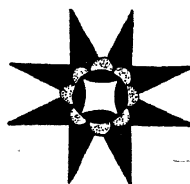
*Summer Sun*

Compass quilt top; red and green "Hickory Leaf" motifs are appliqué'd to intermediate spaces. On this quilt the dramatic pattern is toned down by soft colors—browns, blues and yellow; a red and blue Persian Pear print borders the edge. It is credited to central New Jersey, c. 1835. When seaming was done with curved lines it took infinite patience, for puckers keep a quilt top from lying flat. Dark but glowing calicoes, ginghams and chintzes form the "pincushions," whose concave and convex curves fit into each other with snug precision. A Wild Goose Chase border offers angles as contrast and is set between two other borders of glazed chintz sprinkled with pink roses on a royal blue ground. Butternut-dyed muslin is an interesting backing and the quilting outlines the piecing. The Pincushion was made by a member of the Vanderbilt family in Rockland County, New York, in 1835.



Related in no way to economical necessity there existed a strange urge among some needlewomen to piece a quilt employing hundreds, even thousands, of patches; it seemed competitive, for newspapers proudly announced local "champions." Often the results seemed not to warrant the labor but sparkling mosaics of hexagons, triangles and half-inch squares exist to testify that beauty can be wrought by the use of many small patches. Less than one-inch squares, red and white, have been cut diagonally and seamed, reversing the colors, to make the saw-tooth blocks in the White Cross, Plate 15b. The superior quilting, following the outlines of the piecing, shows up more effectively on the reverse side; the White Cross very well may have suffered the fate of other beautifully quilted examples when their owners, prompted by the vogue for white counterpanes, used them face down, the better to display the quilting! This very lively quilt hails from up-state New York—c. 1835-40.

The Princess Feather, Plate 16, was awarded three New Jersey state prizes. A bold disposition of six appliqué'd four-branched feather units separates sixteen pieced Sunbursts which are set into a white muslin background. Noteworthy is the introduction of extra, single plumes which extend inward from the undulant floral border—



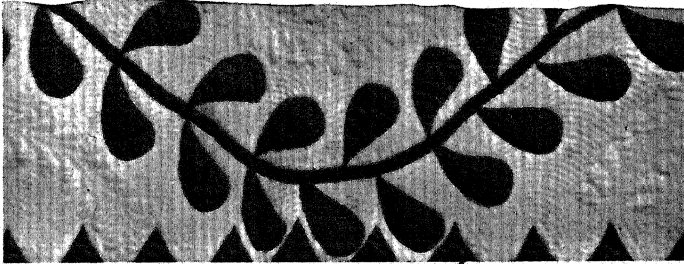
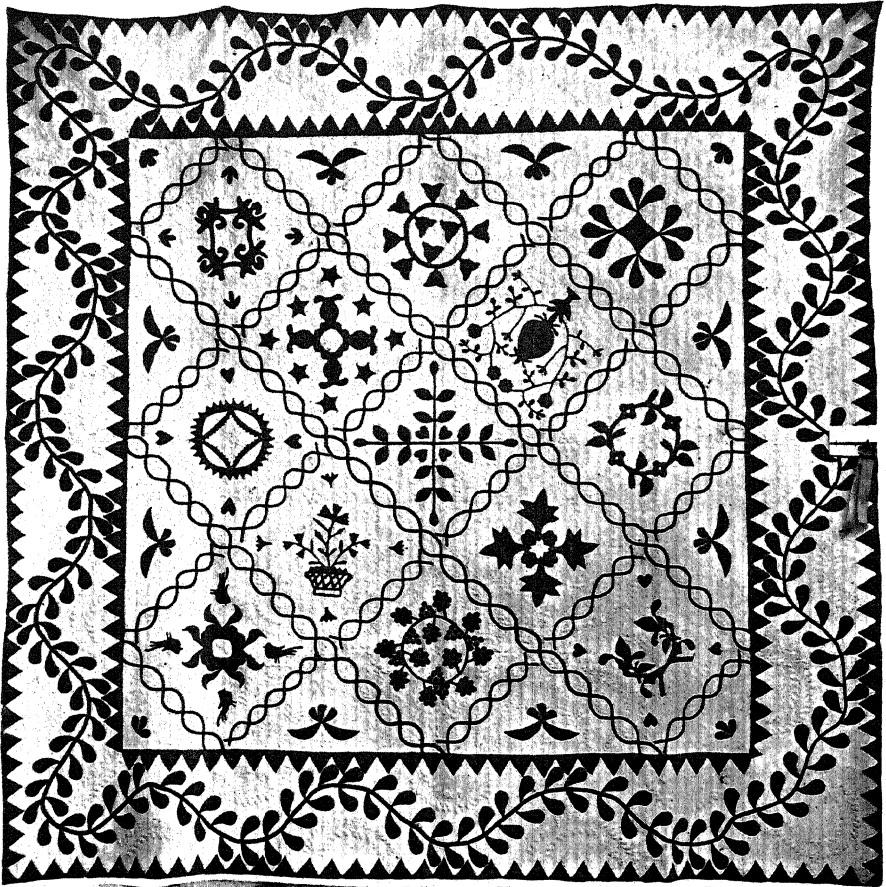
Star Tulip

they happily fill what might have been awkward white spaces, the bugaboo of the quilt planner! Red calico patterned with blue flowers predominates in feathers and border; green, yellow and blue prints appear in the Sunbursts. The spread was made by Mrs. Catherine Ann Fitzgerald and her sisters; Mrs. Fitzgerald's husband, Joshua, was in business in Newark from 1838 to 1856 and the quilt was made during that time. The Princess Feather, a heritage design from England (in Northumberland and Durham it was a pattern that descended from mother to daughter for hundreds of years) enjoys almost unrivaled popularity when used as a quilting motif, due to its adaptability and grace; as a wreath it adorns squares and as a vine it conforms flexibly to border requirements.

That great favorite, the Garden Basket, provided scope for creative pleasure. Though the basic pieced section varied little, the baskets overflowed with flowers, oranges, cherries and grapes while birds lit on the handles and butterflies fluttered near. In Plate 17, nine baskets pieced of red and of green triangles form blocks set diagonally with alternate white squares, the whole surrounded with a serpentine flower-and-bud border. Unique is the decoration done entirely in wool embroidery; many Pennsylvania-Dutch appliqué'd quilts showed wool decoration but it was done with heavier yarn and much heavier hand. Princess Feather wreaths comprise the quilting around the baskets; the quilted Cable-pattern border follows a scalloped edge which is finished with buttonholing, another unique feature. This Garden Basket was made in the Finger Lakes section of New York State, c. 1840.



*Pennsylvania Good Luck Block*



APPLIQUE'D BRIDE'S QUILT

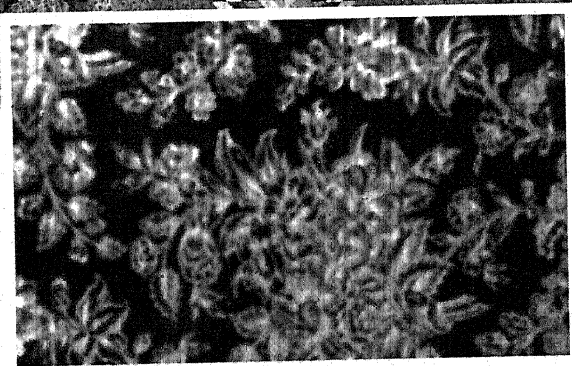
*A blue-ribbon prize-winner, this example of appliqué work at its finest shows the sheer perfection of quilting stitchery on an old ivory background*





MARY TOTTEN'S RISING SUN

*The large, eight-point, pieced star, known by different names, called for expert handling.  
The lavish appliqué in the corners and right-angles is virtually never attempted today*



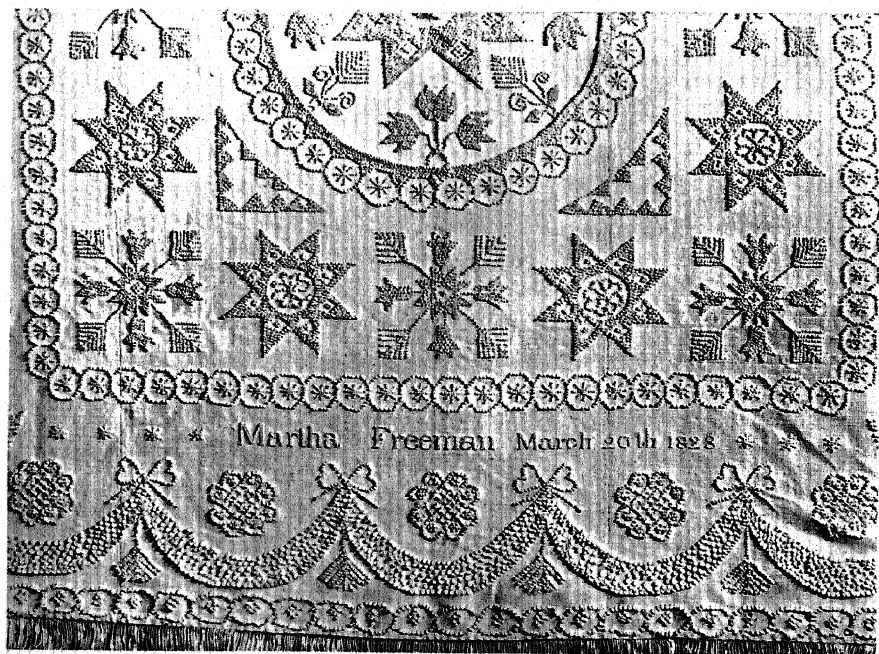
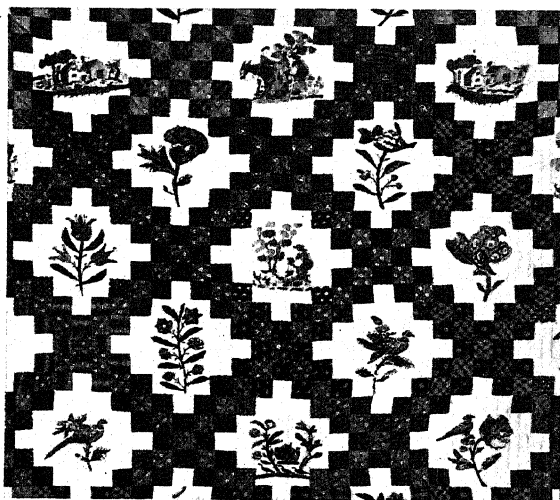
#### STAR OF BETHLEHEM

*Bearing fine early English and French calicoes, this quilt follows the same composition as The Rising Sun, with the spaces filled with pieced stars and half-stars*

a) IRISH CHAIN

*Detail from a pattern familiar to and loved by every old-time quiltmaker.*

*Notice cut-out chintz and toile motifs placed in the squares formed by the pieced design*



b) MARTHA FREEMAN'S CANDLEWICK SPREAD

*The decoration is done by hand on a loomed background. Notice the bearts forming the border loops and rosettes in this detail*

## Chapter three

1840 to 1948

ROSE DESIGNS HAD ALLURE FOR FEMININE TASTES AND THEIR NAMES were legion. Tea Rose, the Rambler, Colonial Rose, Rose Appliqué, Antique Rose, Mexican Rose, and there was a rose for nearly every state in the Union. There were rose patterns named for local belles—Sadie's Choice Rose—but who was Sadie? There were all the variations and versions of the Rose of Sharon, a name which came from the *Song of Songs*:

I am the Rose of Sharon  
And the lily of the valleys

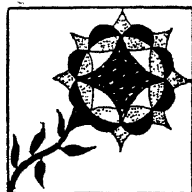
This was considered a quilt title singularly appropriate for a bride. Beautiful in its simplicity, as rose patterns go, is a Whig Rose (sometimes called a Rose of Sharon and often called Rose Appliqué) in three shades of pink combined with leaf green (Plate 18). On this quilt the unit roses are not made in squares but, regularly spaced, they have been appliqué'd directly to the prepared cambric background, in the eighteenth-century method. There is a prim little swag-and-tassel border inside a narrow saw-tooth edge. Unexcelled double-diamond quilting forms a pleasing background for the lavish roses. There was a general rule for which the majority of the quiltmakers had respect. Elaborate and elegant quilting was most effective when the patchwork pattern was unobtrusive in either form or color; cross-bar, horizontal, or diamond quilting was proper background for opulent floral or arabesque motifs; geometric compositions demanded that the lines of their piecing be emphasized. The Whig Rose was made in New Jersey, c. 1840.

By this time in the spread-making era a new trend was evident in the white, tufted type. Olive Dennett, who lived near Newburyport,

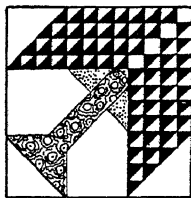
Massachusetts, made the spread (Plate 19), signed, and dated 1845, which shows candlewicking the loops of which have been sheared. Because of this technique a compact snowball effect is produced in parts of the design while the floral details were carried out in the old manner of embroidery with traditional stitches. The background is a fine, homespun cotton twill. By the twentieth century candlewick spreads no longer exhibited embroidery but the process of shearing had come to stay.

Even though influential Benjamin Franklin (who may have been grumpy because his own idea was not approved) denounced the eagle as a bird of "bad moral character," Congress adopted the device for the Great Seal of the United States of America. From the Federal period to the Centennial in 1876 no craftsman felt more of a possessive attitude towards the emblem of freedom than the American

quiltmaker; it was one for which she had made many sacrifices. Patched, woven or printed on cloth, the more or less easily recognized bird flew a streamer from hooked beak: *E pluribus unum*. Unabashed, always with an eye to trade, England promptly printed this symbol of America's freedom on cotton material destined for consumption in the new states. There is in the collection of the New York Historical Society a quilt made by Ann de Groot of Bound Brook, New Jersey, shortly after the Revolution; it shows a wide border and central motif fashioned from one of the eagle-patterned chintzes of English manufacture. During ensuing years, at any threat to the Union (there was the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Civil War), the quiltmakers with intense loyalty patched and stitched the patriotic motif to show where they stood. The Conklins were early settlers in Claverack, New York, and when Eliza made her spread in 1849 the political skies were darkening with approaching threat of disunion. Four appliqué and embroidery units (detail—Plate 20) depict General Washington on horseback saluting a grim Miss Liberty who holds a staff on which is mounted the Liberty Cap; under a constellation of thirteen stars the fiercely protective Eagle spreads his wings. Applied calico tulips and roses with



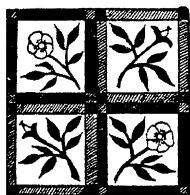
Harrison Rose



Pine Tree

foliated vine, in tones of red, pink, yellow and green, spill in profusion over "field" and border. Eliza was an ambitious needlewoman and a skilful one. Date and signature in India ink are enclosed in leafy lozenge.

Perhaps in no other section of America have custom and art been so faithfully adhered to as among the peoples of the hardy German stock who settled in eastern Pennsylvania. With recollections of cherished possessions left behind, the first settlers lavished exuberant decoration on their newly-made household furnishings; dower chests, tin ware, iron stove plates, needlework samplers, birth certificates and house blessings. It follows that quilts made in the region were strongly individualistic. Made in York, Pennsylvania, in the 1840's, the quilt top shown in Plate 21a is a typical Pennsylvania-Dutch example. The quiltmaker had access to no commercial patterns and needed none—she made up her own.



*Framed Roses*

Crude, a bit stark, they nevertheless show vigor; the Oak Leaves in the second square in the top row have been arranged to form a swastika and other hex marks are apparent in the star-within-a-circle motifs, talismans to ward off misfortune. Similar symbols were painted on barns in Lancaster County and according to ancient legend they kept witches from "verhexing" the cattle. On this unknown maker's quilt little dogs, embroidered, have been worked onto odd spaces and all the appliqué has been ornamented with over-stitchery in cotton thread using buttonhole and chain stitches. Needlewomen of the region strongly favored putting additional fancy stitches over their appliqué and frequently did so by using wool yarns in gaudy colors. On this York quilt top vivid green, strong orange, violent red, blue and purple dazzle the eyes but when the top is used on a honey-colored maple bedstead and the season is snowy mid-winter, it lifts a sagging spirit like a cheerful song.

During the 1840's and 50's there was a fashion for making Auto-graphed Quilts. They were variously termed—Friendship, Bride, Album, Freedom, Presentation—and had this in common: each block was made by the person who signed it, using her own preference as to color, size, material and pattern. Executed with varying degrees of skill, the result too

often was a medley of confused design and inharmonious colors but such quilts were held in high sentiment by the recipients; many were well done and because of names and dates some acquired historic and genealogic importance. Presentation quilts were made by admiring members of a parish and presented to a beloved minister or his wife. A prominent citizen of Yonkers, New York, one time gave facetious voice to a grievance—he said that ministers got all the attention, especially from the ladies. So the Ladies' Sewing Circle of St. John's Church made a quilt (Plate IV) and presented it to the man who had done the complaining. The inscription reads: "To Anson Baldwin, Esq. Presented by the ladies of Yonkers—October, 1847." All the blocks are signed and each is different, but the large central one has special interest and is amusing; in naïve picture-appliqué it shows a farm scene—house, woman at well, geese, chickens, pigs, doghouse and dog. It is signed by three members of the Paddock family and E. E. M. Prowitt. The ladies of St. John's must have had fun making the merry piece and it is to be hoped Mr. Baldwin was properly mollified.

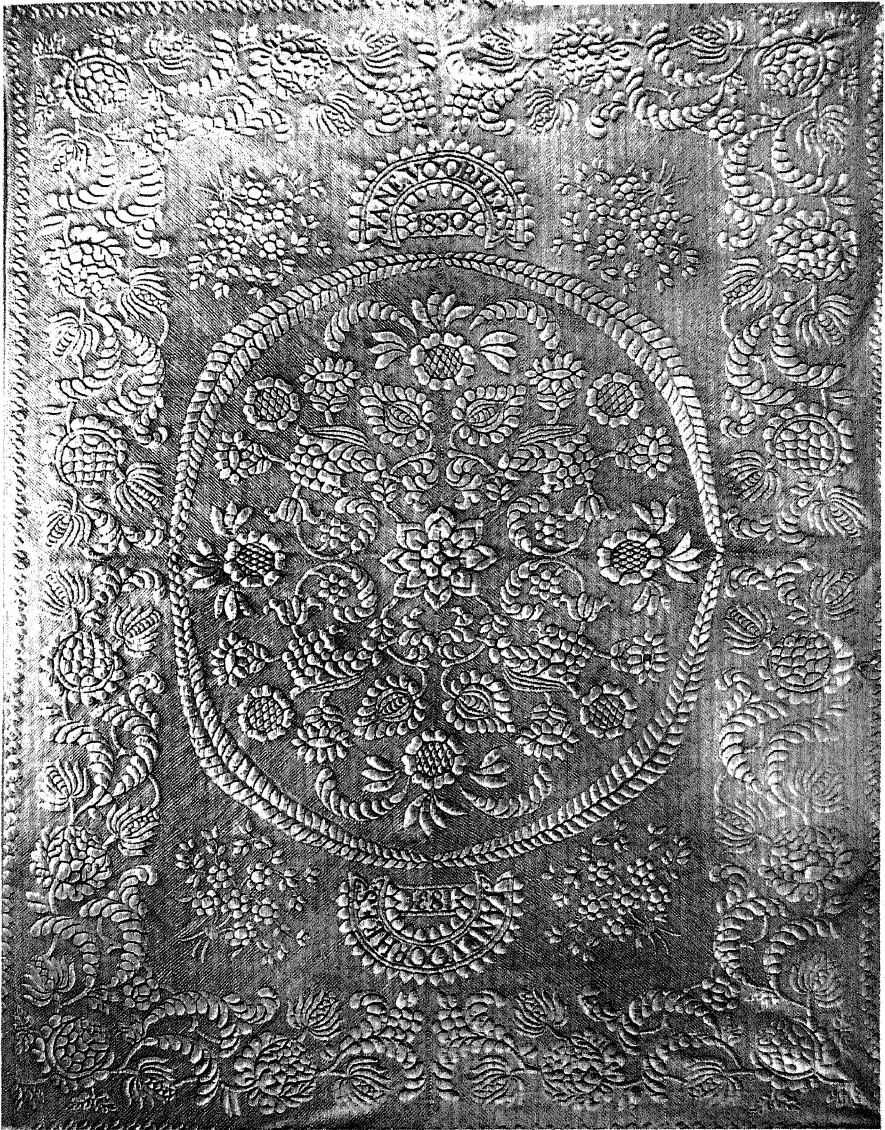
An Autographed Quilt (a bride's), Plate 21b, made entirely of red and white prints which have their own interest, bears on each nine-inch square an applied cut-out motif; squares of paper were folded in halves, then quartered and cut with sharp scissors to make elaborate patterns of scrolls and arabesques which were reminiscent of lacy valentines; some resembled snow crystals and the possibilities were limitless. In the pictured spread half of the motifs include hearts somewhere in their intricacies. The fifth square in the top row bears the inscription:

PRISCILLA HALTON'S WORK

1849

Life looks beyond the hands of time  
Where what we now deplore  
Shall rise in full immortal flower  
And bloom to fade no more.

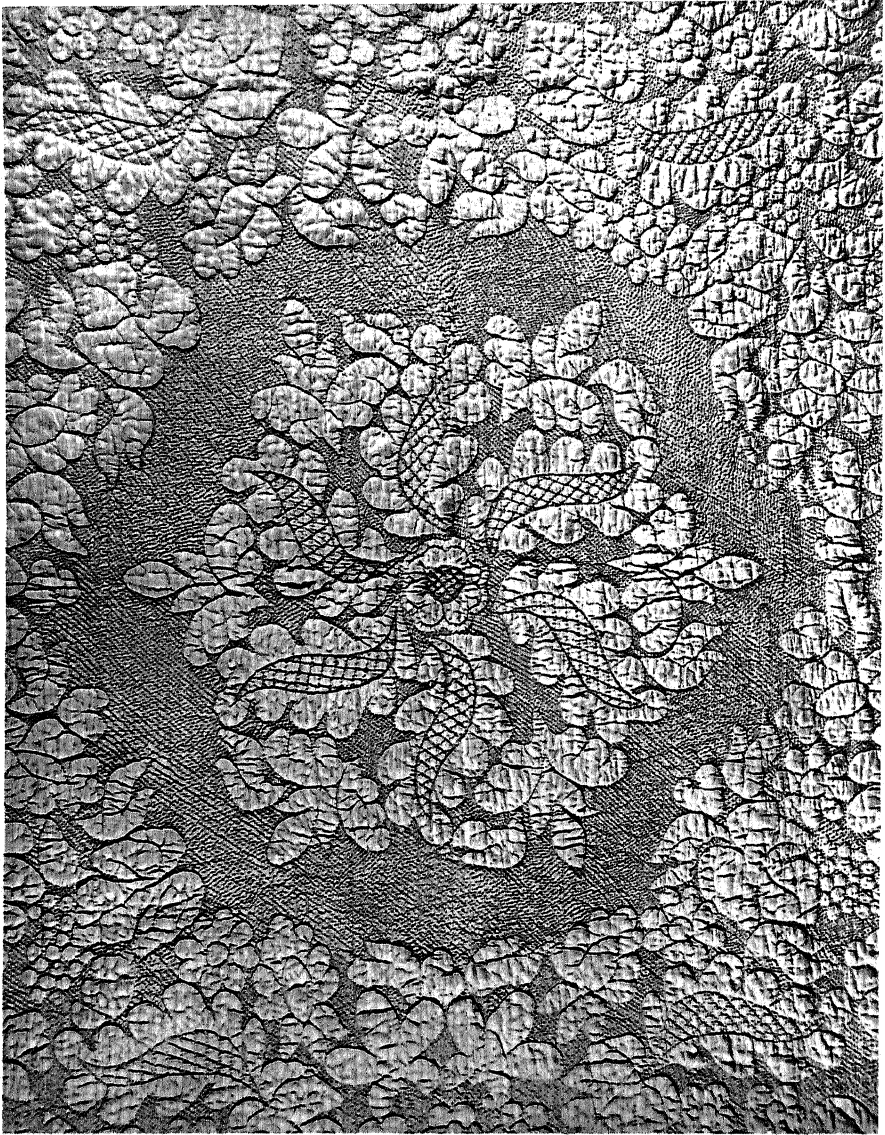
The place of making was Fulton, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, as the faded signatures of friends, male and female, attested; dim, but discernible, are the added embellishments of rose sprays, clasped hands, weeping



THE JANE VOORHEES CORDED SPREAD

*A corded spread is a rare item in America. The two dates, 1830-1831, suggest that the industrious needlewoman accomplished her amazing task in one year!*





ALL-QUILTED WHITE SPREAD

*The patrician elegance of these quilts is accentuated in this detail by the close quilting which forms a textured background, throwing the main design into sharp relief*

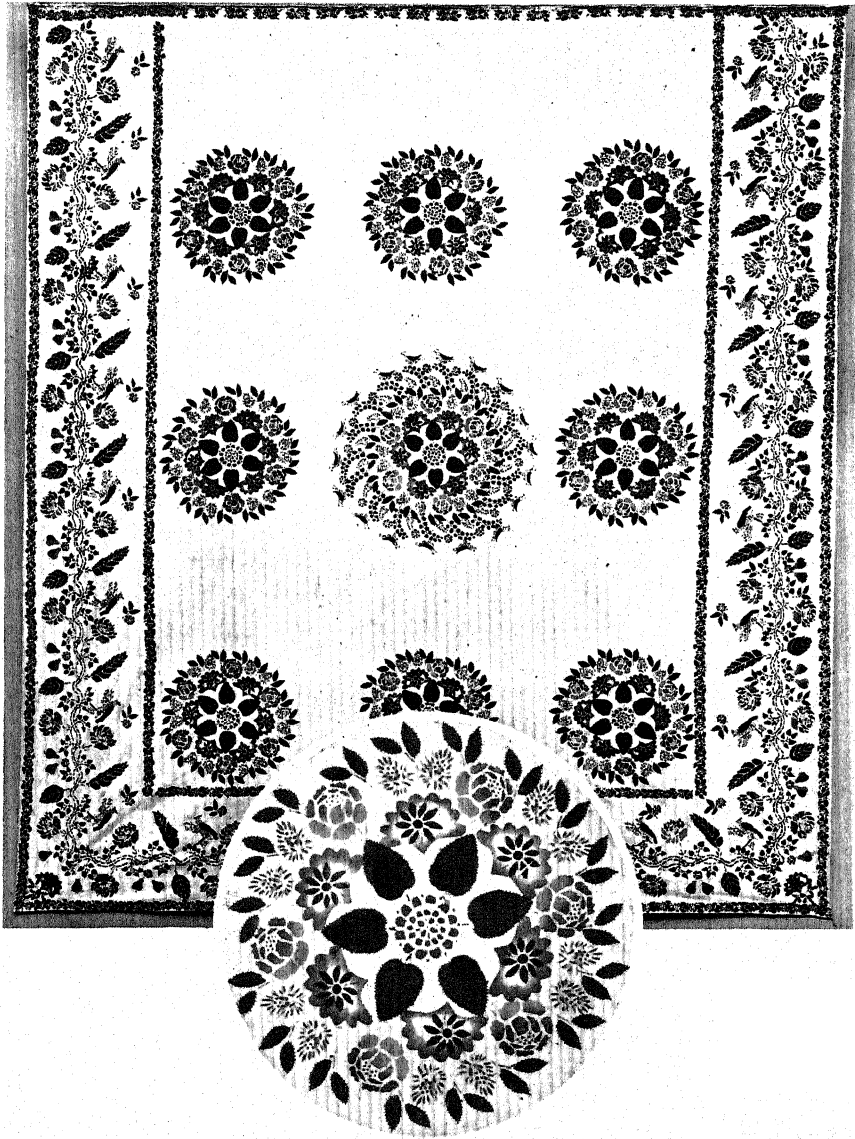
willows, sheaves of wheat, funeral urns—needlewomen of the Victorian era so enjoyed depicting gloom! In spite of the morbid touch the quilt is brightly handsome and the difficult appliqué work deftly done. Was it good ink, bad ink, or careless tubbing that caused markings on some quilts to remain black and clear while on others they faded to illegibility long before the quilt wore out? In the Prints Department of the Metropolitan Museum there is a small book with large pretensions: *The School of Wisdom. A Repository of the most Valuable Curiosities of Art. Written for the accommodation of young ladies and gentlemen. Printed in 1787 at New Brunswick, New Jersey.* Among the “valuable curiosities” is a recipe for making India Ink: “Take black, dried horse beans, burn them to a powder, mix them with gum arabic water and bring them to a mass, which press in a mould made for that purpose and let it dry.” Perhaps makers of India ink in 1849 had not heard that one!

Who can tell from what source inspiration will come? Elizabeth Riley, born in Hopewell, New Jersey, went to Florida for her health in 1850, where time hung heavy on her hands during a long convalescence. One day while browsing in an ancient St. Augustine churchyard she was struck by the beauty of a design chiseled on a white marble tombstone. Elizabeth sketched the pattern and made a quilt in replica. Despite the inspiration there is nothing melancholy about the quilt (Plate 22). Red, pink, yellow and white roses, set in nests of Victoria-green leaves which cluster in the urn, the wreath and in the corner sprays—all flaunt colors as boastful as a spring rose grower’s catalogue. The exaggerated padding of centers and petals has been done on different planes, assisting the idea in the quiltmaker’s mind—the sculptured effect. When Elizabeth herself finally passed on, she was buried beside her ancestor, John Hart, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

It was not only the hand on the distaff side that plied the needle. Men designed and made quilts which displayed invention and independence, for the mathematical-minded sex went in for complicated mosaics. Elderly Charles Pratt of Philadelphia made thirty-three Biblical picture quilts, each of which was composed of over thirty thousand half-inch squares. The human figures in Mr. Pratt’s work have perfect proportions

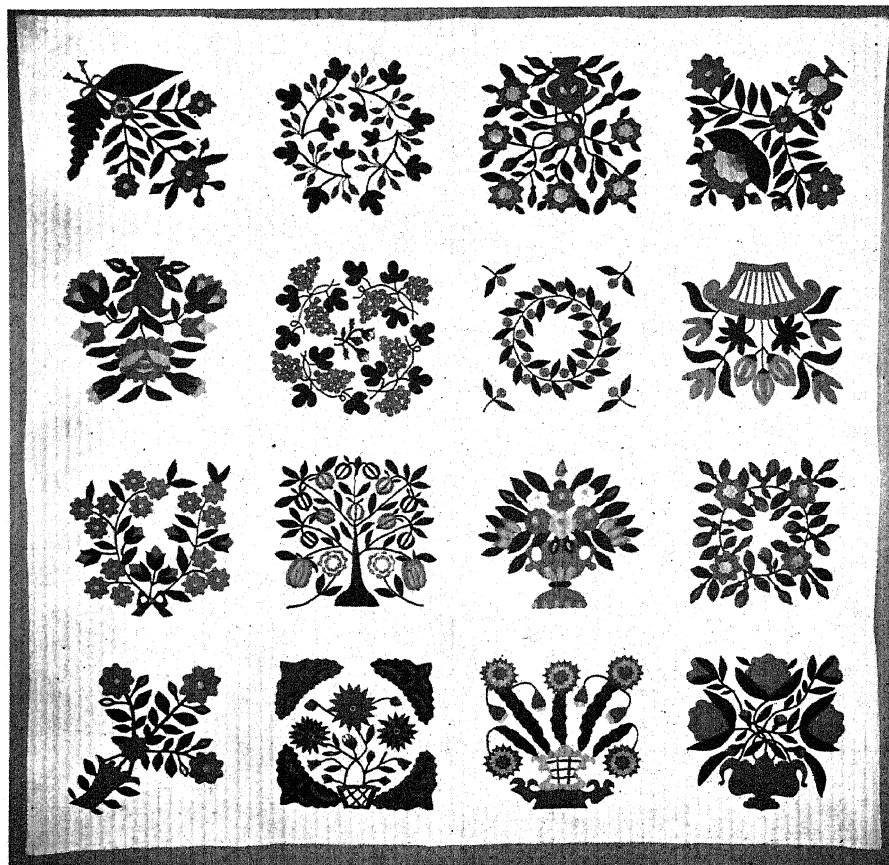
and his fabulous mosaics, *The Ninety and Nine* and *Ruth and Naomi*, won many special prizes at exhibitions in the United States and Canada. The aged quiltmaker pieced his designs to ease a great loneliness after the death of his wife. Occupational therapists recognize the beneficent effect on the mentally disturbed when they can be induced to work with gay colored patches to create pleasing designs, and women everywhere have always turned to needlecraft for relief from monotony and even sorrow. Men also. Toward the close of the Civil War a wounded, discharged Union soldier decided to make a quilt to soothe his shattered nerves; he did not quite get away from it all for his quilt (Plate 23) has silhouette figures of armed soldiers on horseback and a foot marching grimly around an intermediate border; in the central group foot soldiers surround women who appear to be offering refreshment on trays. Their outlines recall the trademark figure on the box of a well-known brand of chocolate; the trademark was adopted by the manufacturers in 1780 and had its origin in a contemporary French painting—"La Chocolatière." A border comprising a lively bit of piecework, twelve inches wide, separates the central panel from the marching soldiers; wide borders of chintz, Scotch ginghams, and paisley-patterned calicoes, all characteristic of the period, finish the edges. Colors are soft browns, cream, blue, rose and dull reds. Crescent moons, hearts, and fat, complacent doves may have been introduced to the militant picture to humor a wife or sweetheart. The appliqué stitchery is meticulously even and the quilting entirely adequate.

The Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence demonstrated in a popular form the industrial growth of a nation of which, up to that time, the people had not been fully conscious. Women were impressed with one fact of incalculable importance to them—the machine age had arrived and production in quantity was to relieve them of the burden of furnishing a household and clothing a family by the labor of their hands, just as the power-driven tools were to revise the lives of their menfolk. A new age opened before bewildered eyes. Many commemorative objects were made as souvenirs of this most important of all world's fairs. Cotton cloth of American manufacture displayed flags, stars, eagles,



STENCILED COUNTERPANE

*In two layers, and with no quilting, this rare type of bedcover shows charming floral designs on a background of cambric*



# BALTIMORE BRIDE'S QUILT

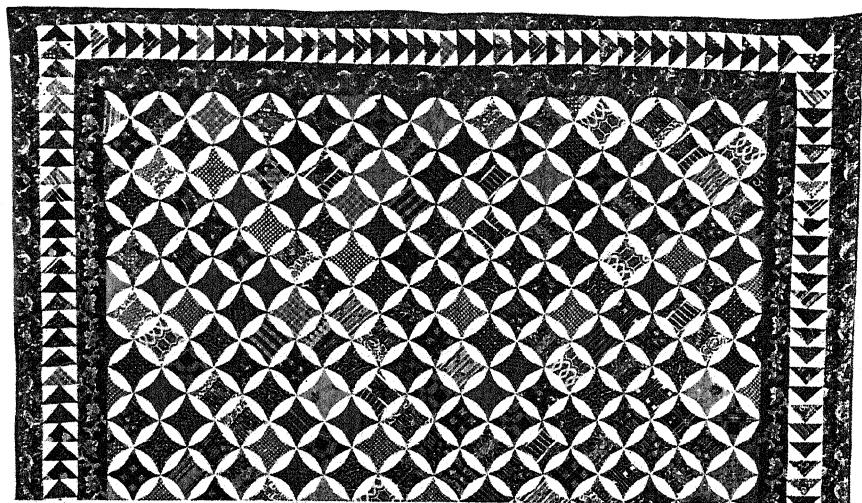
*A "bride's quilt" was the finest one in a dower and its squares of diverse patterns were usually made by close friends of the bride-to-be.*

*This example is one of the earliest of its type*

liberty bells, liberty caps, "bombs bursting in air," vignettes of Washington and shields with the two significant dates, 1776-1876. There were even striped patterns incorporating lines from Longfellow's poem: "Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State; Sail on, O Union, strong and great!" There was one stripe which employed the names of the thirteen original colonies. All these commemorative prints appear in the quilt, Plate 24, which is centered by a kerchief printed in black on white of Memorial Hall, the building which housed the fine arts of the exposition and which was to become a permanent part of the Pennsylvania Museum of Art. The Centennial Quilt may not be "pretty" but it is, in a sense, an historic document.

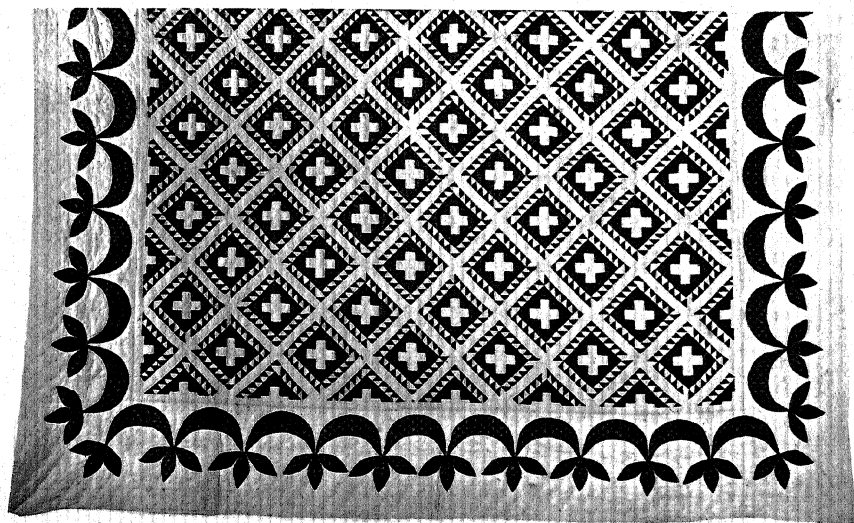
Of doubtful artistic worth but typical of the late Victorian era are the silk, satin and velvet Crazy Quilts familiar to all. Not old enough to be judged impersonally as an antique, the type has been cruelly derided, but, happily, tastes differ. There are those who stoutly maintain they are beautiful, influenced perhaps by fond memories of relatives who made them. Made of quality silks that "stand alone," the use of the crazy patch method assured that each tiny piece, no matter what its shape, could be utilized. The quilt shown in Plate 25 has more virtue than the common run of its kind; properly it was known as a "throw" for the parlor sofa, since none were quilted. Four fans placed around the central decoration supply a sense of symmetry. Suggestive of similar needlework done by Chinese women, it is the delicate artistry displayed in the embroidery which ornaments each patch that makes this item an outstanding one. Worked in silk floss, chenille, silver and gold threads, there is appealing grace in the delicate details of sprays of flowers, song birds, swan, peacock, little animals, and children in Kate Greenaway frocks. Each patch is outlined with triple feather-stitching, briar stitches and a feathery vine bearing miniature tulips and rose-buds; it is said fancy stitches of this latter type are a heritage from Spanish needlewomen. This Crazy Quilt, signed and dated M.W. 1884-1885, was made in Rockland County, New York. According to family history one of the elegant brocades was part of a vest worn by Grandfather W— when he shook hands with President Arthur at the President's Inaugural Reception.

The story of American needlework is not yet finished. Many women are making quilts using the traditional patterns and often introducing a note of modernity. For instance, Mrs. Bertha Stenge of Chicago disclaims being an artist; she describes herself as a "housewife, a mother and a woman who loves quilts." But she is modest. She has won awards in exhibitions where there was keen competition and competent judging; she captured first prize at the New York World's Fair in 1939-40 and again the grand award was hers for an appliqué "Victory Quilt" in a National Needlework Competition sponsored by a magazine in 1943. Patriotism combined with good design, dignity and superlative workmanship were winning factors. There is ingenuity and amazing mastery of minute detail exhibited in one of Mrs. Stenge's latest accomplishments—The Quilt Show, Plate 26. In a series of twelve units arranged around a central panel, gray-gowned ladies spread their quilts for display. Each quilt is a replica in miniature of a full-sized bedspread with border! Thirteen different and well-known pieced patterns are used. An Irish Chain in the center panel has been pieced in *quarter-inch squares* of red and white; a Philadelphia Pavement has tiny blue forget-me-not centers; a Lover's Knot has been appliqué'd in oval patches the size of a small finger nail; other designs are easily recognizable. The panels have backgrounds of dark blue chintz and they are set in a field of white, quilted in the *trapunto* technique—motifs in high relief. Mrs. Stenge is mistress of this kind of quilting and employs it effectively on all her quilts; she creates her own designs and does not go far afield for inspiration. One of her recent quilts shows a border quilted in stiff-looking ribbed stalks topped with feathery leaves. Palm trees? No, the quiltmaker says—celery! The border on the Quilt Show is carried out in a series of Pieced Bouquets, a traditional pattern and one which has a square center allowing for variety of complementary decoration; into each one of the fifty-two bouquets on this quilt has been set (again in miniature) an old-time pieced quilt pattern: Cactus Basket, Goose-in-the-Pond, Little Ship, Palm Leaves, Blazing Star, Winding Ways, World-without-End—an index of pieced block designs! Borders of plain blue chintz and striped blue gingham frame three sections of the Quilt Show and keep the designs in good order.



a) PINCUSHION

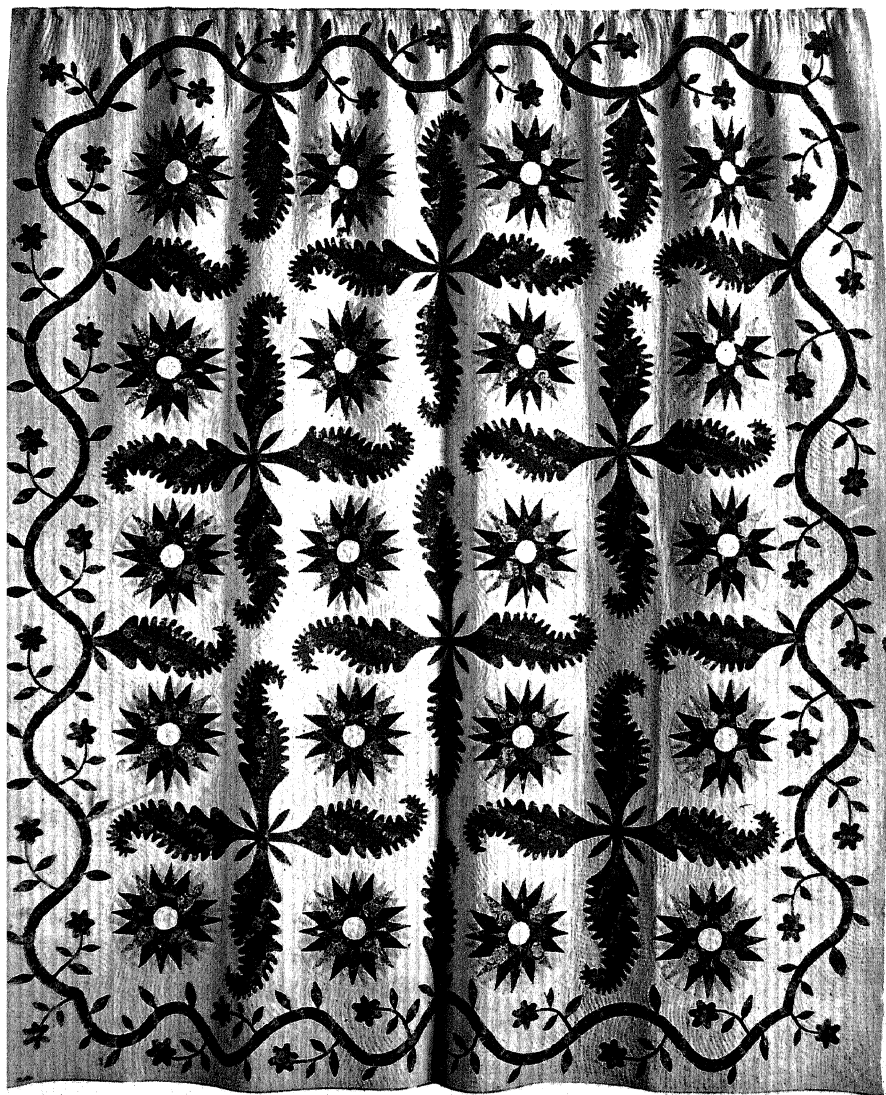
*Detail showing the painstaking piecework and gayly-flowered, highly-glazed chintz which combine to make a sparkling bedspread. It is lined with home-dyed butternut muslin*



b) THE WHITE CROSS

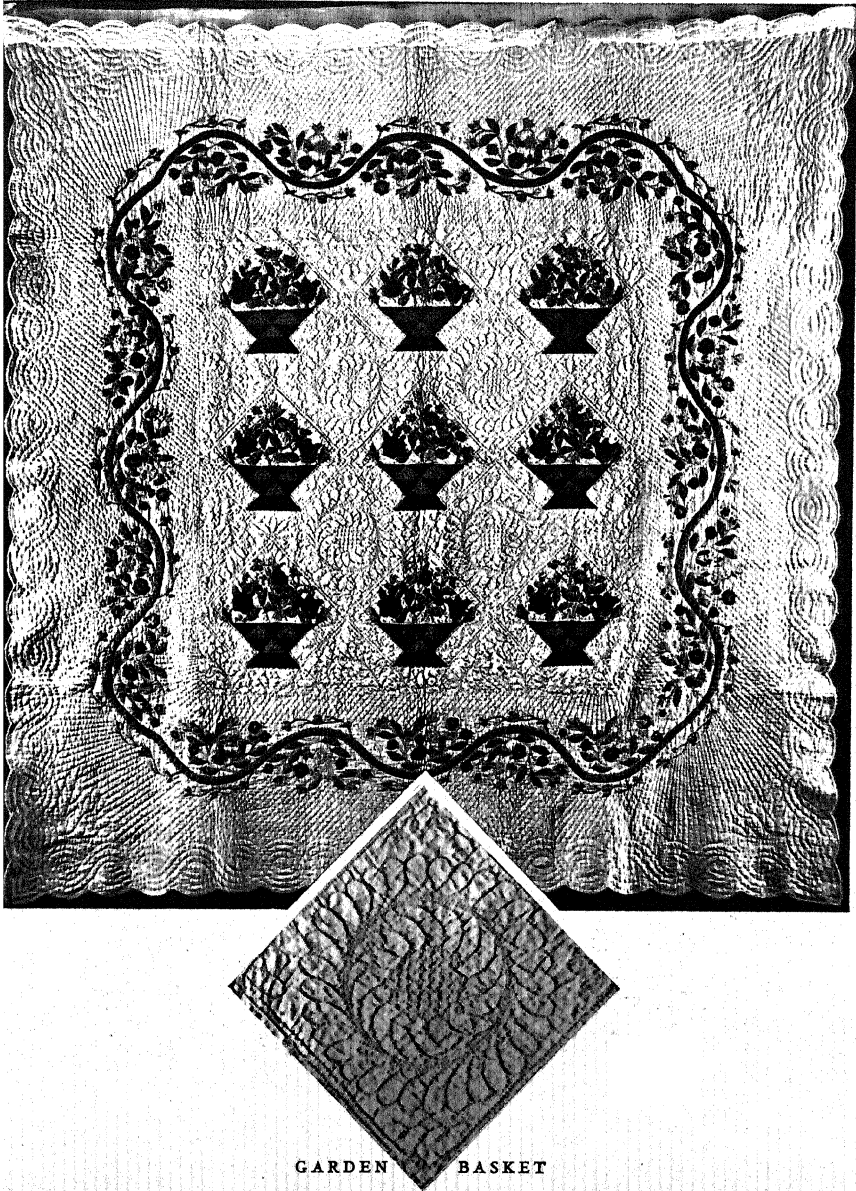
*Great patience was required in piecing the hundreds of half-inch squares forming the saw-tooth blocks. The swag border makes a pleasant frame. [Detail]*





PRINCESS FEATHER AND SUNBURST

*The bold design and excellent workmanship on this quilt were influential  
in its awards of three New Jersey state prizes*



GARDEN BASKET

*Rare, if not unique, is the delicate crewel embroidery of flowers, leaves and meandering vines that fill the pieced baskets and form the border of this quilt*



WHIG ROSE

*Unlike most rose designs this one has been pieced in eight sections, each section itself pieced three times in shaded colors. [Detail]*



## Woven Coverlets

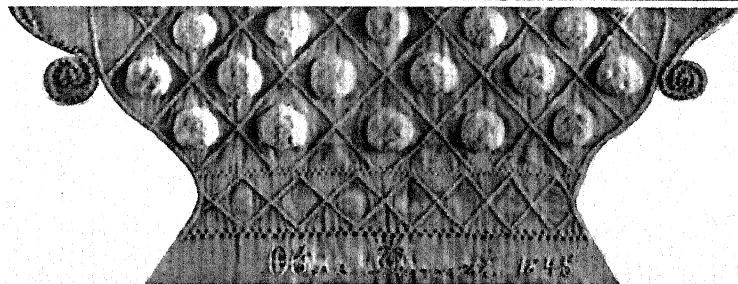
WEAVING WAS A HOUSEHOLD FUNCTION IN THE FIRST COLONIAL settlements in America, the art having been brought over from England, Scotland, Germany and the Netherlands. Fertile soil attracted the agricultural-minded Dutch to the western end of Long Island where a road running from the hills, or what is now Prospect Park, to the ocean had been a trail used by the Canarsee Indians. Along this tract the settlers from Holland built their homesteads and established their "bouwerries." Through industry and thrift they prospered. Both men and women brought to the new land an expert knowledge of how to prepare flax and wool for spinning, dyeing and weaving. Clothing for the entire family was made in the home and many of the looms were home-built, hewn from native timber. The fundamentals of weaving were the same wherever practised, and the housewife, Dutch, British or Mennonite, wove jean, fustian or thicksett, and linsey-woolsey for clothing; bedcovers of flax and wool were confined to geometric patterns, stripes, squares or diamonds, mostly in the overshot weave or simple techniques imposed by the limitations of the narrow, four-harness looms. Such coverlets were woven in two strips, usually two and a half to three yards long, and seamed down the center. Ida Stillwell, born in the Gravesend Colony on western Long Island in 1766, wove a blue and white coverlet in linen warp overshot with indigo blue wool on such a loom (Plate 27a); it is a sturdy example of the early type of weaving done by women in the home. A wide coverlet with no seaming indicates later, mechanical weaving.

The conditions under which weaving was done differed. In mild climates usually there was a separate loom shed situated a few hundred yards from the dwelling house; in New England all the equipment for

spinning and weaving was set up in the garret when the house had one; in many frontier homes the loom was placed in a corner of the "common room" where all the activity of the household centered. In the Dutch settlement of Amersfoort (like Gravesend and Breuckelen, one of the original Five Towns on the western end of Long Island), the Pieter Claesen Wyckoff homestead, built by the first Director-General of New Amsterdam, who established Pieter as his agent, boasted a lean-to which was used as a weave shed by successive generations of Wyckoffs who occupied the house from 1637 to 1901. In this home in 1737 was born Pieter A. Wyckoff who wove the "Single Snowball" coverlet, Plate 27b. In natural-toned flax and rich sapphire blue wool, it is a fine example of early double-cloth weaving. The pattern stands out in sharp distinctness and the two strips were so evenly woven the seaming is barely noticeable. Most good coverlets were made with borders from ten to fourteen inches wide; rarely was there a top border, though sometimes there was an extra matching strip of weaving for the pillows. Pieter was a skilled workman who wove not only for his own family which consisted of a wife, thirteen children and his Negro slaves, but he is known also to have woven wool and linen cloth and blankets for other families in the Flatlands community. In every household fine linen was woven for personal use; descendants still have sheer linen house caps and heavy, quilted linsey-woolsey (linen warp and wool weft) striped petticoats that were worn by their foremothers.

There was an agonizing interruption of the diligent, peaceful Dutch way of living during the occupation of Long Island by British troops in the Revolution; the dominies were still preaching to their congregations in forceful Dutch and it is recorded that British officers and men, attending Sunday morning services, responded lustily to prayers unaware they were subscribing to the success of George Washington and not that of King George!

Young Mrs. Voorhees with her two infant sons lived in a small dwelling in Gravesend while Stephen, her husband, was with the Patriot Army. General Washington, anticipating the British invasion, ordered all supplies, which could feed and comfort the enemy, destroyed; the decree threatened the life of the Voorhees family cow and the food supply



OLIVE DENNETT'S CANDLEWICK SPREAD

*The snowball effect is the result of sheared tufting.  
The floral design was worked by many embroidery stitches*



WASHINGTON SALUTES MISS LIBERTY

*Restricted in outlets for expressions of political convictions, old-time quiltmakers showed where they stood by stitching patriotic and symbolic motifs into their needlework.*

*Washington and the Eagle (shown in this detail) were leading favorites*



of the infants. During inspections, the local patriot officers turned conveniently blind and when the Hessians marched through the territory they found no Voorhees cow—it was living in the house with the family. Jacobus, oldest of the infants, grew up and married; his bride was Ida Stillwell, weaver of the coverlet shown in Plate 27a.

A Dutch farm stood on a ninety-acre property constituting Bergen's Island on the shores of the bay in Flatlands, the oldest part of which is said to have been built for the West India Company in 1643 for use in the wampum industry. In 1793 John Bergen inherited the property from his father; he and his wife Rebecca raised eight children in the homestead. Johanna, born in 1805, kept a diary from 1825 to 1829; it is a succinct account of life on a Dutch farm and as everyone in the neighboring communities was a "cozen" there was much visiting and a social picture unfolds. Johanna's brother Tunis was a weaver for the Flatlands community though he also worked with his brothers at the manifold duties imposed by such a large plantation. Johanna's diary entries weave a pattern of their own:

"John breaking flax"; "Mrs. Waite hear to hetchel." A hatchel or heckle was a square board into which were set iron teeth; through these the tangled flax was drawn until the fine fibers were combed from the coarser tow. There were those who were expert and swift at the task and sometimes were hired for the service. Nothing was wasted, for even the tow was woven into floor mats or spun into rope. Again: "Tunis finished weaving for this season having wove 437 ells"; "Pedlar hear, took dinner"; "Tunis finished our peace—80 ells—took 548 quills"; "Over in the slay to visit Mr. Stillwell—Ann, mother and I took our weels." Unwilling ever to be idle, Dutch women carried their spinning-wheels with them when they went visiting. After Johanna's father died her mother took over management of the farm; the diarist notes: "Mother pays wages to all our coulered people." Later, on July 4, 1827: "Independence Day, the 51 year. Clear and the wind W. Betsy the coulered girl over to Mr. Kouwenhoven's to go keep the 5th of July—the slaves in this state being made free." For the woman of today who still believes her foremothers spun, wove and made patchwork quilts because they had nothing else

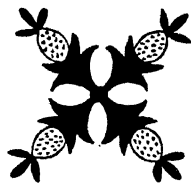


to do, here is one: "—killed our ox today, had 84 pounds of fat, mother and I finished the candles, had 350." Without editorial comment, Johanna recorded startling news: "A man aged 21 years was married hear this day to a lady upward of 40 years this being her 9 husbands."

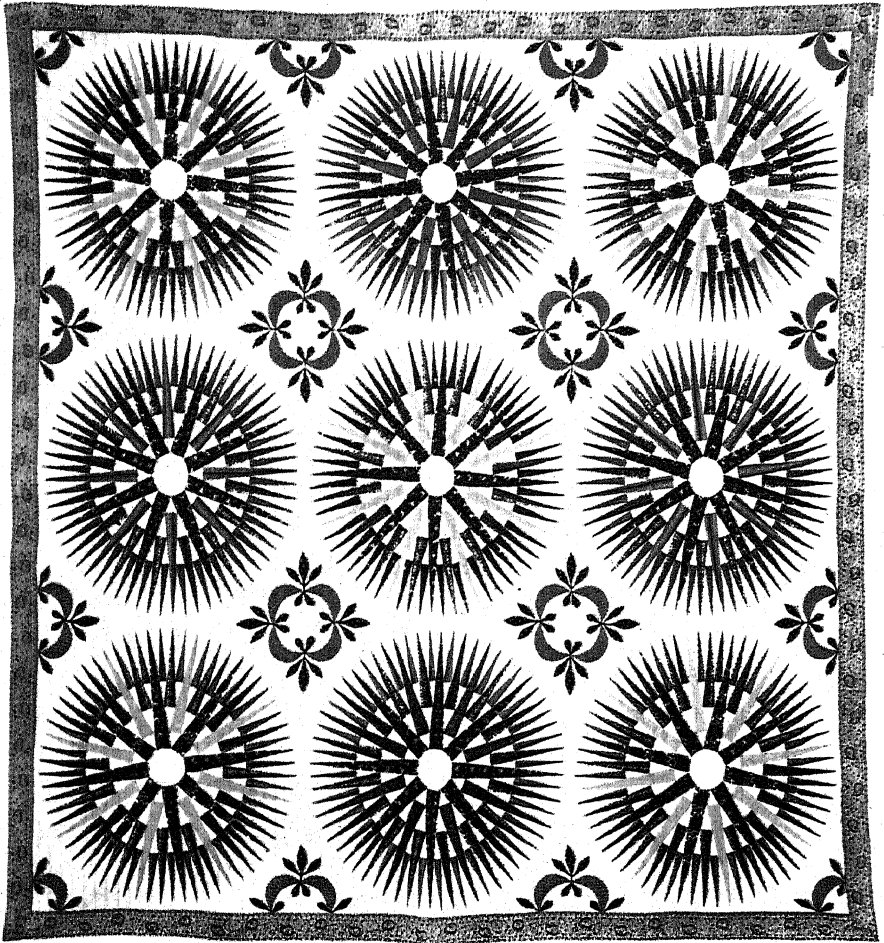


Many coverlet patterns seem to have been common property; they travelled as the quilt patterns had, by way of the "pedlar" who took dinner and stayed overnight and brought news of the outside world as well as tidbits of gossip from the neighboring town. He and the itinerant weaver were welcome visitors in every isolated farmstead. Peddlers were versatile men who paid for their hospitality in many ways. There is the story told in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, of one who, after listening to the reproaches of a housewife because he had no "new" quilt patterns to offer, seized scissors and cut a dashing design from folded paper. The quilt made from his pattern, in bold scrolls and blinding colors, may be seen in Landis Valley Museum, Lancaster. So, too, the travelling weaver was depended upon for new weaving drafts.

In double woven coverlets two fabrics, one overlaying the other, interlace at outlines of the pattern and reverse color; though the domestic manufacturer who had a suitable loom, and better than average skill, found double-cloth weaving within his or her capacity, more and more the production of such coverlets passed into the hands of craftsmen with specialized training. Feminine taste always favors free-flowing design. There had been no hope to indulge this preference and little scope for inventiveness in the restrictions of the four-harness looms; this longing found outlet in hand-embroidery of floral forms in bright wools with which woolen blankets of the period were decorated as if in protest against the linear rigidity of squares and plaids generally. In a private collection there is a creamy wool blanket woven with indigo blue to make a five-inch plaid. Onto each square is worked, in the same blue wool, flowers, leaves and seed-pods which duplicate old botanical prints; it is edged with hand-knotted blue wool fringe and dated 1778. Also in private collections are to be found the rare "rose" blankets; made

*Pineapple*





MARINER'S COMPASS

*Long, slender patches and the sharp points of a "Mariner's Compass" were post-graduate work.  
Mathematical precision and well-chosen colors make this example  
a work of fine art*

for dower chests of prospective brides, they were woven of softest white wool and decorated with characteristic conventional "roses" in each of the four corners, embroidered in bright-colored wools. Found on Long Island and Pennsylvania, they belong to the first half of the nineteenth century. The housewife continued to prepare, spin and dye her yarns but she awaited with impatience the visit of the weaver who would arrive with his own equipment, set it up in the weave shed or barn and offer to her eagerness the excitement of new patterns.

It was not long after the Revolution that power machinery for spinning and weaving displaced the spinning wheels and the ancient hand looms, marking the end of an epoch. Like all new inventions the automatic loom was dubbed "new-fangled" and therefore impractical. The first Jacquard loom came to the United States in 1826, and there is no austerity in the patterns that are possible to the miracle loom! Women welcomed the advent of pictorial designs, considering them far more elegant than their old-time geometrics. Apparently there was nothing that could not be pictured and, alas, many weavers set out to prove it. They overdid it. Eagles, scrolls, festoons, flower groups, birds of Paradise, birds on nests feeding their young, harps, peacocks, palm trees, pagodas, villages, "Boston Town," Washington on horseback, *E pluribus unum*, mottoes, names, dates, locales, and weavers' signatures—many of them on one piece!

Master craftsmen with better taste exercised greater restraint. Probably the fine example of early Jacquard coverlet, Plate 28, originated in New York state; it was purchased in Poughkeepsie years ago. Six formal flower groups comprise the central composition; they, and the small stylized petal clusters which separate them, are identical units used in coverlets signed by S. Butterfield and J. Cunningham—both of whom added to their signatures "Weaver. N. Hartford, Oneida County, N.Y." and dates running from 1837 to 1840. Both weavers worked the popular "Declaration of Independence" design, usually in blue and white; it shows the before-mentioned floral units with General Washington on horseback in corners and a border in repeat of the motto: Under This We Prosper. The pictured coverlet is woven in a single width; its color is not red,

not quite rose, but a lovely soft coral pink. Two corners bear the inscription: "Agriculture and Manufactures are the Foundation of our Independence. July, 4, 1836." Opposite corners have American eagles. Eagles, double columns topped with Masonic emblems and alternated with what may be Independence Hall, form two side borders. The name C. Collings probably is the person for whom the coverlet was woven.

The fine work of the master weavers lives on in the clear and exact drafts (they look so much like music!) which were left a heritage for devoted adherents, who weave not so much for profit as for artistic expression and to carry on an ancient tradition.

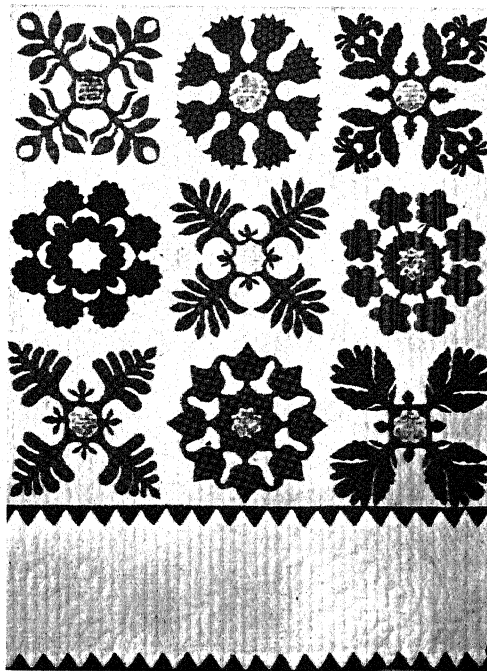
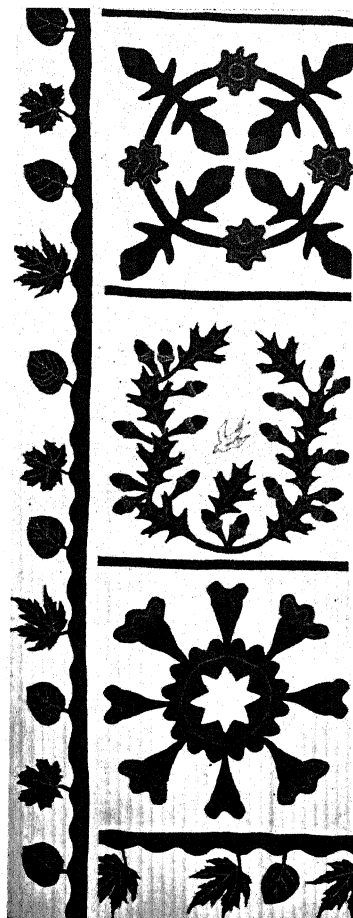


*Eagle Appliqué*

a) PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH

APPLIQUÉ

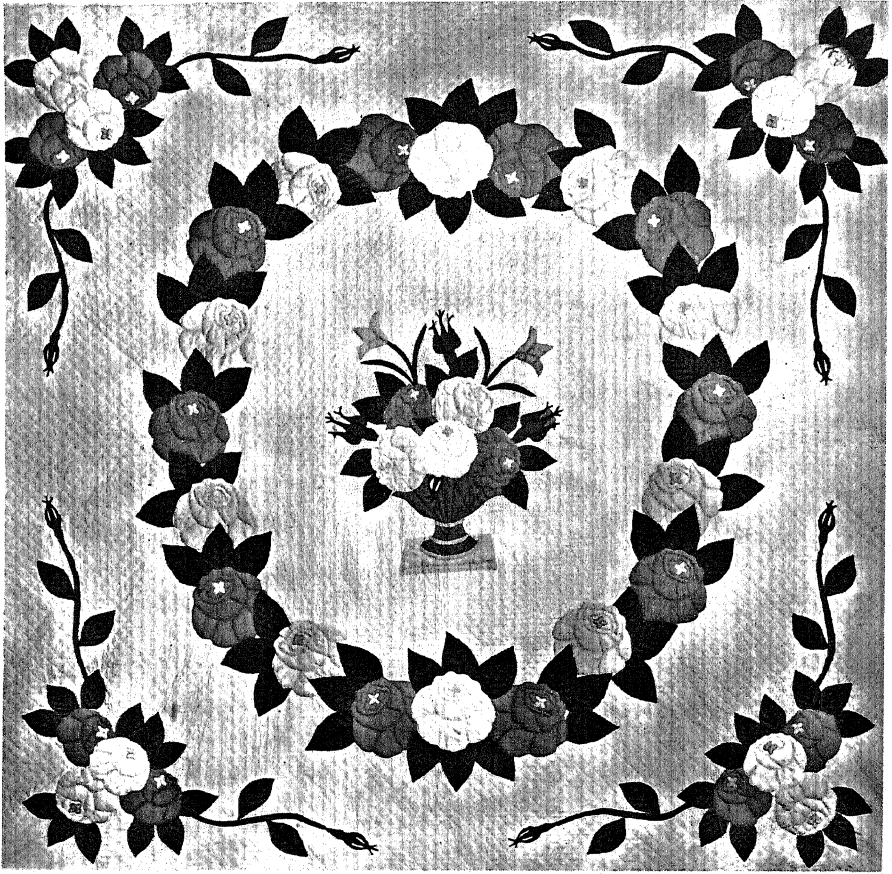
*This detail, from a characteristic Penn-Dutch quilt top, shows the crude but vital designs expressive of the individualistic art of the early settlers of hardy German stock in Eastern Pennsylvania*



b) AUTOGRAPHED BRIDE'S QUILT

*Each intricate, cut-out motif in this spread (made in Pennsylvania in 1849) attests to fingers skilled in appliqué. [Detail]*





SCULPTURED ROSES

*This gay quilt, made to relieve boredom during a long convalescence, was inspired by the sculptured cameo design on a tombstone*

*Part two*



A MANUAL OF  
INSTRUCTION







## How to make a Quilt

THE MODERN WOMAN WHO ADMIRES AN ANCIENT HEIRLOOM QUILT, and wishes wistfully that she could make one like it but contemplates the work involved with misgiving, can be reassured; the task today is neither arduous nor necessarily lengthy. Unlike her great-grandmother she need not raise sheep, grow and break flax, spin yarn, gather herbs, wrestle with a dye bath nor wait for the visit of an itinerant peddler before she can purchase a pretty pattern. Equipped with a knowledge of plain sewing, the good sense to select a pattern within her capabilities, and a modicum of neatness and accuracy, even the novice can produce a creditable, even beautiful, patchwork quilt. Perhaps the would-be quiltmaker already has an antique quilt in mind whose design she would like to reproduce; this is an excellent idea, especially if the original is available for use as a guide.

Of inestimable value are the many nationally circularized women's magazines. Quilt articles appearing on their pages at frequent intervals offer a great variety of patterns, traditional and modern, in some instances complete working directions, and charming illustrations of finished specimens. Commercial firms whose products (cotton thread and cotton batting) are essential to the quiltmaker issue pamphlets with color charts accompanied by directions that seem practically foolproof. Many of these also contain blueprints for making a quilting frame at home.

There are two mechanical techniques used in making a top for a quilt: piecework and appliqué. In piecework, patches are sewed together by seaming; in appliqué, patches are applied or "laid on" to a background and felled down. The old-time quiltmaker served an apprenticeship on simple designs before she attempted a complicated Rising Sun, a

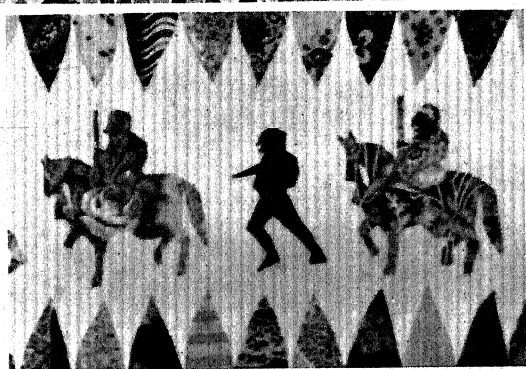
Mariner's Compass or an elaborate appliqué'd Bride's Quilt. The beginner would do well to practise making a block or two in each technique and then select a pattern to be worked in whichever technique she handles with greater ease, and with greater pleasure. Patchwork should be relaxing; it can be enjoyed. When the needleworker feels herself getting tense, work should be laid aside for another day. Never must the labor on a quilt become drudgery.

## ◆◆◆ PLANNING ◆◆◆

A magnificent heirloom spread merits special treatment; dramatic in design and very likely strong in color, it deserves not only the appropriate bedstead on which to display its ancient charm but it should keynote the decorative scheme of the entire bedroom. Not everyone is fortunate enough to possess such a treasure. But the new quilt can be planned for the type of bed it is to adorn, and the style, coloring and pattern can be selected to fit in with existing decorations. This is an individual problem, one in which the innate good taste of the quiltmaker is put to the test; personality may be expressed but it will be wise of the neophyte to leave drama to the experienced decorator. Simplicity in design, meticulous workmanship on excellent materials are least likely to result in disappointment; indeed these ingredients, plus a dash of imagination, could result in a spread which would be an object of beauty and a joy forever.

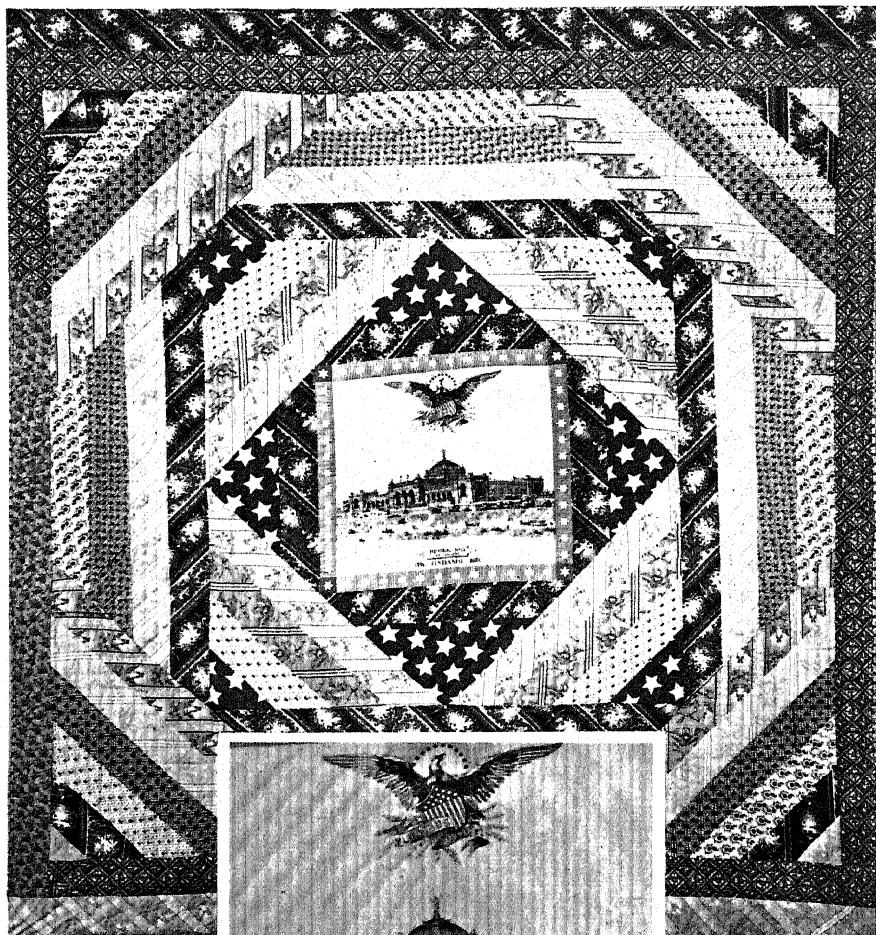
## ◆◆◆ SIZES ◆◆◆

There is a practical as well as an aesthetic reason for planning a quilt for the bed on which it is to be used: size. Is there to be a valance around the bed? Are the pillows to be covered by the spread? The manner in which the counterpane is to be used will determine its size, and size will



SOLDIER'S QUILT

*Good planning, interesting calicoes of the period, and excellent stitchery are present in this quilt, made by a wounded Civil War veteran*



CENTENNIAL QUILT

*Made entirely of American textiles printed to commemorate the anniversary  
of the one-hundredth year of independence*

determine the effective disposal of the pieced or appliqué'd blocks which are to be fitted within its margins. A full-size counterpane used without petticoat valance and long enough to fold over pillows should finish 90×108 inches. For twin-bed size the 72-inch width is usual. Unless they are made to order, beds are standard in length. Unless the quilt is to be a geometric all-over, the maker must decide at an early stage how large the unit squares are to be; whether they are to be set parallel to the border or set diagonally; whether there is to be "lattice-work," "sash-work" (terms which mean strips), or alternate plain blocks. The term "set" is used by quiltmakers to indicate the special manner in which unit blocks are joined together. Beginners have found it useful to experiment with squares cut from paper which may be placed on the bed to help judge how many blocks of a certain size will be needed and what disposition of them would be most effective; the pattern could be roughly chalked in on one or two of the squares as a further help. A good preliminary plan saves later worry. At this point a decision should also be made concerning the width of the border or borders and exactly where they are to begin. Proportion is very important. When a valance is used, obviously the bedcover needs only to be large enough to cover the top of the bed or fold a little way over the side. Measure for this carefully.

#### ◆◆◆ MATERIALS ◆◆◆

Selecting materials generally involves a shopping spree. Fine needlework deserves the compliment of the very best materials a purse can afford. There are sprigged percales that imitate early calicoes, demure plaid gingham, old-fashioned paisley prints, eighteenth-century floral chintzes. The small-patterned prints are best for mosaics, stars or any pattern requiring tiny patches. Bold floral, bird or scroll chintzes or linens show to best advantage in wide borders; if the quiltmaker is skillful enough, these flower sprays and bird groups may be cut out and used for appliqué decoration on many parts of a spread. A central medallion employing

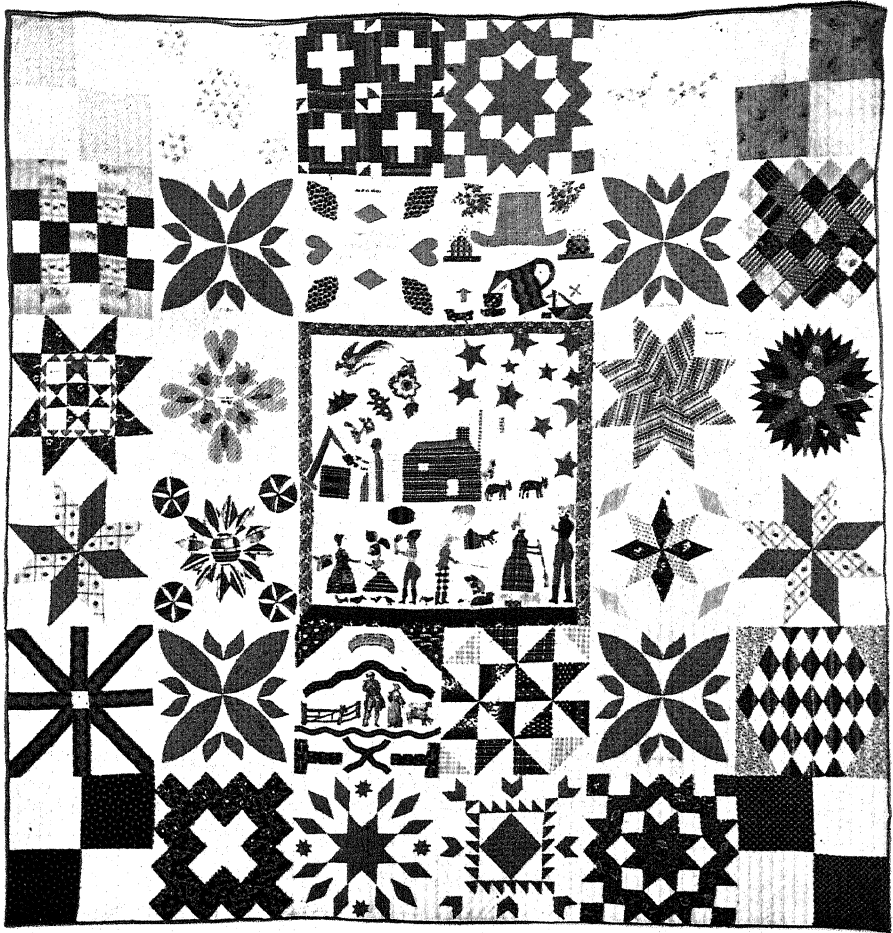
a cut-out chintz unit may be surrounded in the old-time manner with a series of pieced or appliqué'd borders. The value of contrasts should not be forgotten; the effectiveness of all pieced work depends on a judicious mixture of patterned with plain and light with dark materials. Confusion in design will result if this elementary rule is disregarded.

Fabrics should be of good quality, firm weave and soft texture. Today, most good-grade cotton wash goods are pre-shrunk and fast-dye; with reasonable laundering care they should neither shrink nor run. If there is any doubt about it, try washing a small piece in a white bowl. Broadcloth, soft cambric, percale, gingham, sateen and soft-finished chintzes are recommended. Silks and satins with challie linings sometimes are used for the luxurious, down-filled, quilted puffs but, for the average quilt, cotton always was, and still is, the favorite material.

Yardage required depends so much on pattern and size of quilt, only the most general estimate can be given here. An appliqué spread usually requires more than a pieced quilt. A full-size top requires at least ten to twelve yards and the proportions for colors naturally are determined by the pattern. For the background of an appliqué'd spread, full-size, and for the lining of a full-size quilt as well, nine yards (three lengths of three yards each) is required. Usually cotton material is one yard wide. The seams of these lengths must be firmly whipped together and then pressed; there must be no creases to interfere with quilting or to make ridges in the finished quilt. Excess width should be cut off *both* sides; the cut-off strips can be utilized for patches or lattice-work.

Cotton batting is the preferred interlining; some quiltmakers like flannelette and others use a wool blanket, worn thin. Only cotton batting gives that much-desired puffy, blistered look to quilting. Never use sheet wadding; it is too stiff for easy quilting and does not give the fluffy effect. Warmth will depend on thickness of interlining but close and fine quilting can be achieved only through a thin layer of padding. Linings white, unbleached, or of printed cloth must be without starch or dressing and they must be soft-textured enough to allow for easy quilting.

For cording purposes, roving or candlewicking gives satisfaction; use iny puffs of cotton batting for "stuffing" individual segments of designs.



PRESENTATION QUILT

*Admiring friends pieced and appliqué'd squares to be made into this presentation quilt.*

*Though the pictured example has life and charm, the type was usually more important for sentimental than artistic reasons*





## ◆◆◆ CUTTING ◆◆◆

Cutting the patches for a pieced quilt is a precision job and so much depends on mathematical accuracy that each patch must be cut individually. Never try to cut a pile or even several patches in one operation. Better be safe than sorry. More latitude may be allowed in cutting patches for appliqué but if the applied design is to be in repeat, with each block joining onto the next for a kaleidoscopic effect, precision and uniformity are desirable. Naturalistic designs are more free-flowing and therefore not so demanding. Whether the patch is to be part of piecework or a unit applied to background (ancient term—"laid-on work"), cut a template of cardboard for each differently shaped unit of the design—indeed, cut several. Place this cardboard replica of the pattern on the wrong side of the cloth and with a pencil mark the exact outline. Cut one-quarter inch from the pencil line; when seaming, *sew on the pencil line*. Keep angles and points sharp and if the template frays discard it for a fresh one. When a border or long, continuous strips are to be used, they should first be cut off the material. Squares and triangles must be cut with the weave; right-angled triangles must have two sides straight and one true bias; long, slender patches, such as occur in Sunbursts and Compass patterns, must have straight threads running from center of base to apex. Hexagons must have two sides on straight of goods. Cloth should be pressed free of creases and if there is any doubt about straight of goods, a thread can be pulled for guidance.

## ◆◆◆ PIECING ◆◆◆

Piecing consists of sewing patches, one to another, with a running stitch, making a seam. A knot or backstitch should start each seam and the end of the seam should be fastened securely. Care should be taken to have all seam widths even—following the penciled lines. Compare patchwork units frequently to be sure they are identical. Press the seams to one side;

Fig. A

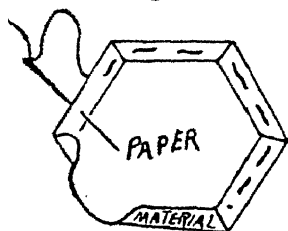
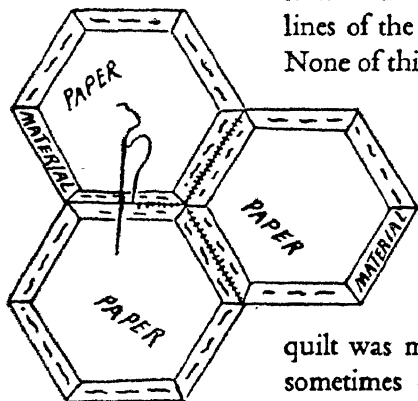


Fig. B

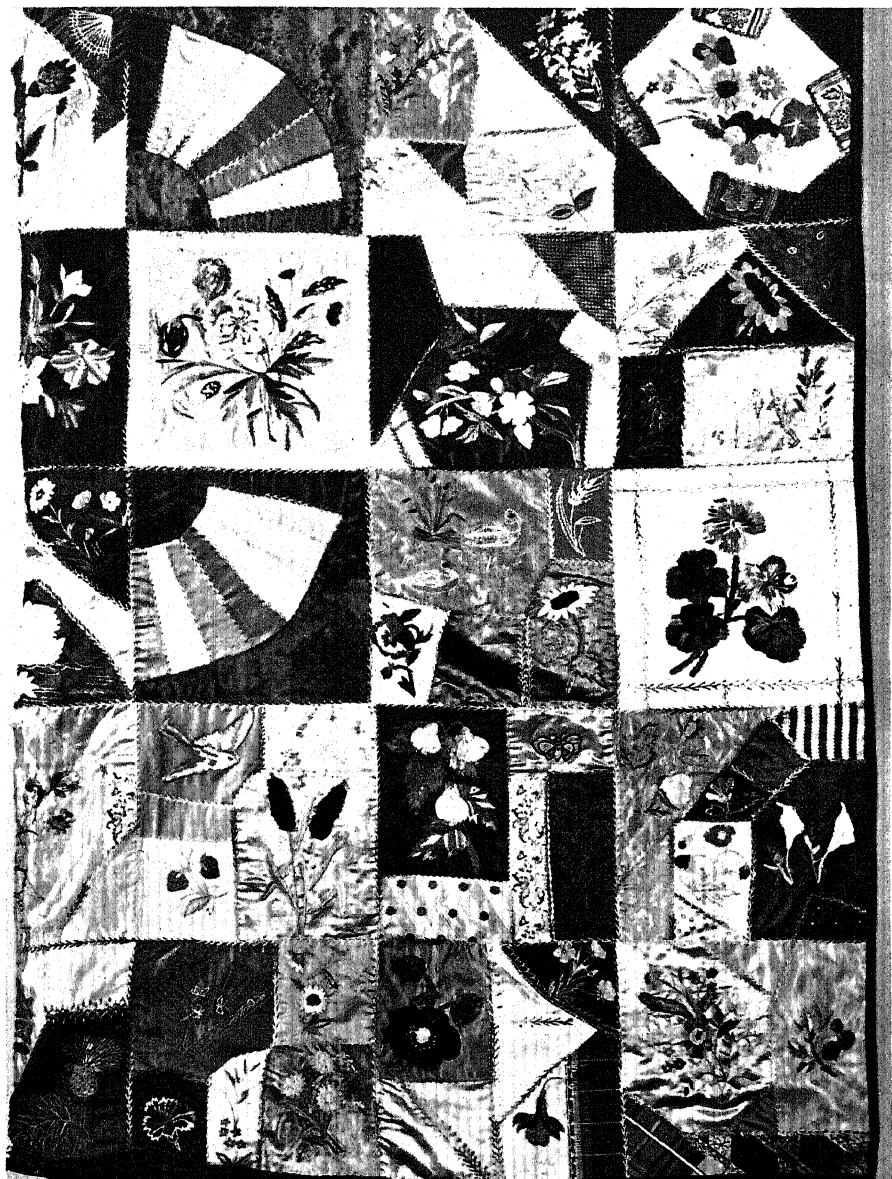


never press them open. Trim protruding angles. If two bias edges come together keep the sewing thread just taut enough to prevent stretching. If there are many long bias edges in the selected pattern, sew a running stitch inside the edges as a stay to keep them under control until they are seamed together. It stands to reason that all unit blocks for a quilt top must be exactly the same size. When they are set together with strips the lines of the rows must be even with each other. None of this "setting together" is difficult if care is exercised from the start.

When geometrical patchwork involves the sewing together of many tiny pieces or diamond-shaped patches, the old-time quiltmaker did it over firm paper, brown or white. Often such a

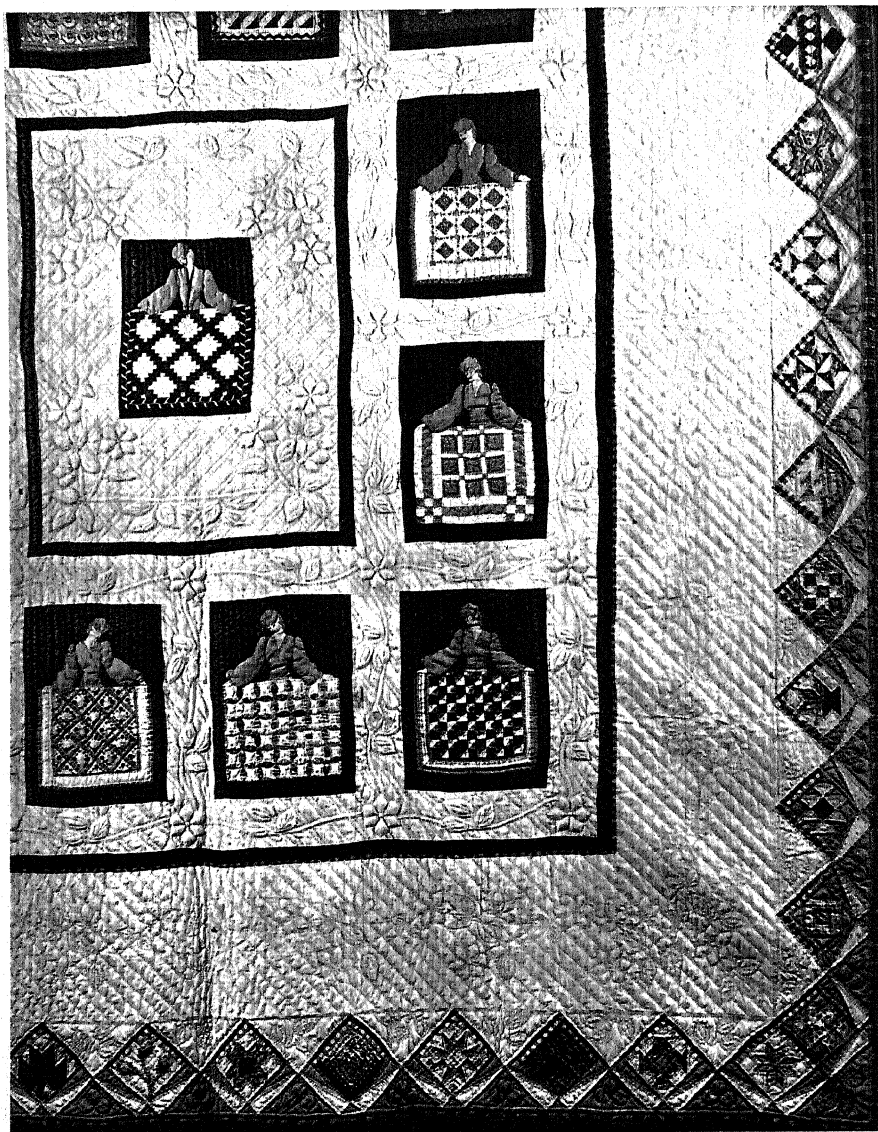
quilt was made over paper cut from letters and sometimes dates and parts of names or places have helped identify the age and origin of the

quilt! Suppose the pattern is to be the well-known Grandmother's Flower Garden in which the unit patches are hexagons of uniform size. The paper pattern should be cut the exact size of the template; the material should be cut as described before, to allow one-quarter inch for seam. Lay the paper shape onto the patch of material; fold the quarter-inch seam allowance over paper and baste (Fig. A). After a number of patches have been prepared and checked to make sure they are uniform in size, they are joined by holding two together firmly while whipping the edges (it will not matter if the stitches go through the paper) with an over-and-over stitch (Fig. B). Use a fine needle and 60 or 70 thread. The basting stitches and paper may be removed as the work progresses or they may be left until the entire top is finished. The technique assures well-defined angles and points and it looks well on the right side.



VICTORIAN CRAZY QUILT

*This excellent example bears embroidery of surprising delicacy and charm. [Detail]*



THE QUILT SHOW

*Ladies in gray display their quilts—actual replicas of traditional patterns in piecework and appliqué—in this example of superb workmanship. [Detail]*

## ◆◆◆ APPLIQUE ◆◆◆

All component parts of an appliqué pattern should have their edges creased back (on the penciled line) and basted. For circular forms run a fine gathering thread near the edge before turning back and full-in as needed; the thread and the fullness must not be visible on the outer side for good appliqué must be free of ripples. If desired, flowers, leaves and arabesque forms may be padded with a thin layer of cotton batting before basting them down to their positions on background. These will then have an extra raised effect when the final quilting is done around their outlines. Stems of flowers and meandering vines are made of bias triple folds which are to be whipped down on both sides. Tuck stem ends under flowers and leaf ends under stems. On a concave curve, clip in well to the folding back line, to help preserve the original contour of the patch. Use tiny whipping stitches with a fine needle and 70 thread to appliqué patches to background. Sometimes appliqué motifs are finished with buttonhole or chain stitches; whatever the technique, even spacing and small stitches are the hall-mark of skillful workmanship.

## ◆◆◆ BASIC PATTERNS EASY TO DRAW ◆◆◆

In quilt lore basic geometric patterns bear classifications which indicate to the patchworker their construction; there are the one-patch, two-patch, three-patch, four-patch, nine-patch and double nine-patch. Some of the fundamental patterns (most of which are based on a square) are very simple and yet very attractive. They can be drafted by anyone with a ruler, compass and sharp pencil. First, a square is drawn the exact size desired for use in a quilt; the corners must be true right angles. The following directions and sketches will be helpful in making a few of the popular star arrangements and geometric repeats.

To make a four-point star (four-patch) draw lines dividing the previously determined square horizontally and again vertically; from the

center make a mark about one-third distance down on each of the four lines. To be sure of accuracy, set foot of compass in exact center of square and place point of compass (pencil) on one of the marks; describe circle. Join the points where the circle touches the dividing lines with the four corners of the square (Fig. C). The four-point star thus formed could be made of figured material and backgrounded with white or any plain color. A suggested variation shows each point of star cut in half lengthwise and seamed together again in two sharply contrasting colors; when pieced of French blue and white this star makes a quilt of clean-cut, nautical smartness (Fig. D). Another variation: square the circle as shown in Fig. E. Make one unit with a dark star, light square center and light background; alternate this with a unit made with light star, dark square center and dark background. Repeat this alternation throughout the pieced top and the sparkling kaleidoscopic result is known as World Without End (Fig. F).

The ever-popular Grandmother's Flower Garden requires but one pattern—a hexagon with its size based on individual taste. Draw a square about the size of the desired unit hexagon; draw horizontal and vertical lines dividing the square into quarters. Place foot of compass at exact center of square and describe circle. Keeping compass set at same angle, place foot at intersection of vertical line and circle (marked 1 in Fig G) and mark off six exact divisions of the circle, as in sketch; draw straight lines connecting them. Cut carefully on straight lines of the hexagon and use it to make a template for any mosaic whose basic unit is a hexagon, as in the Grandmother's Flower Garden.

To make the attractive six-pointed star draw a square the size of the desired star; divide into quarters and describe circle in the same manner as for hexagon; mark off the six divisions. Connect by lines 1 to 3, 3 to 5, 5 to 1; also 2 to 4, 4 to 6, 6 to 2—as shown in Fig H. Draw lines as shown by dotted lines between arrows and six triangles of equal size will emerge. The unit triangle can be used to make the pattern in Fig J. A variation: by filling in the six points of the star, as shown in Fig J, the correct diamond shape will be apparent for making a true six-pointed star. Divide the points in half lengthwise and piece together again with contrasting

Fig. C

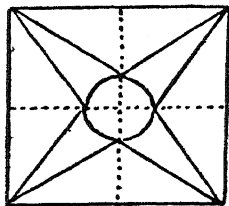


Fig. D

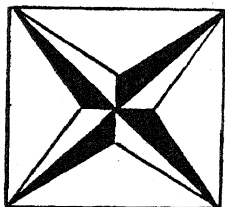


Fig. E

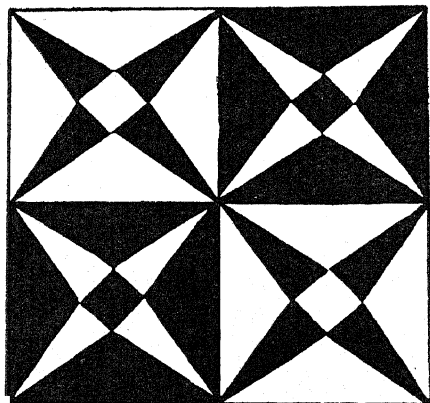
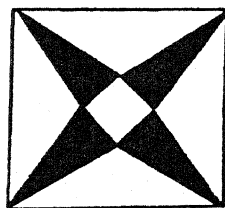


Fig. F

Fig. G

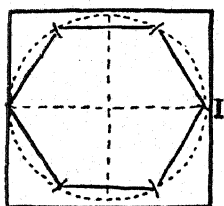


Fig. H

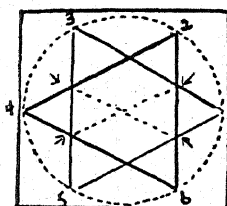


Fig. J

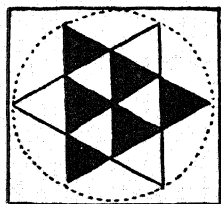
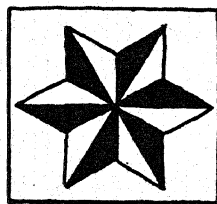


Fig. K



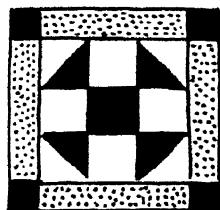


colors and the star will appear as in Fig K. These star motifs may be appliqué'd to a square background and set together with lattice-work or with alternate plain blocks.

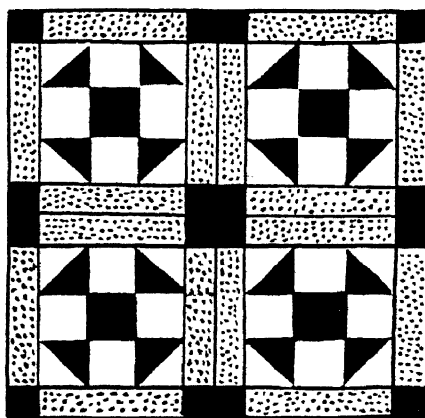
Astonishing are the effects that can be obtained by manipulating the simplest of all pieced blocks—a square cut in halves diagonally and pieced together again in contrasting colors (Fig. L). Piece nine of them together as shown in center of Fig. M, and it becomes a Shoo-fly (a nine-patch); when framed with strips of figured print and plain corner squares, it becomes a Philadelphia Pavement (a double nine-patch). An all-over pieced top of this pattern is unbelievably pretty, proving that the beginner need not be afraid of mediocrity because of simplicity in a pattern. Fig. N shows four blocks set together.



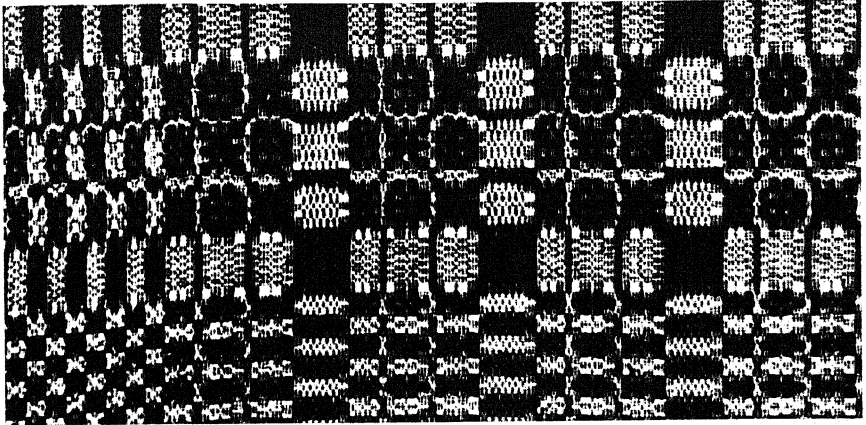
*Fig. L*



*Fig. M*

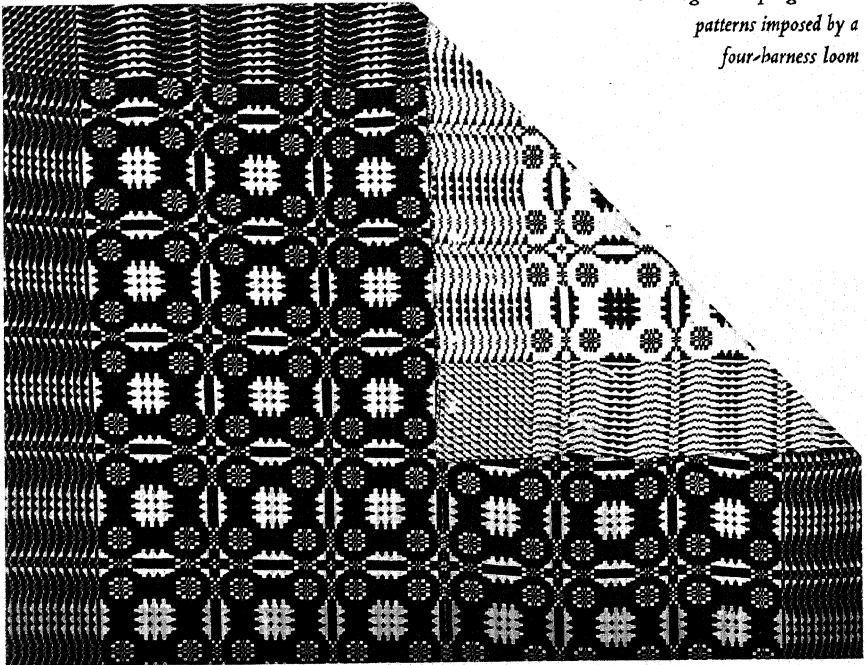


*Fig. N*



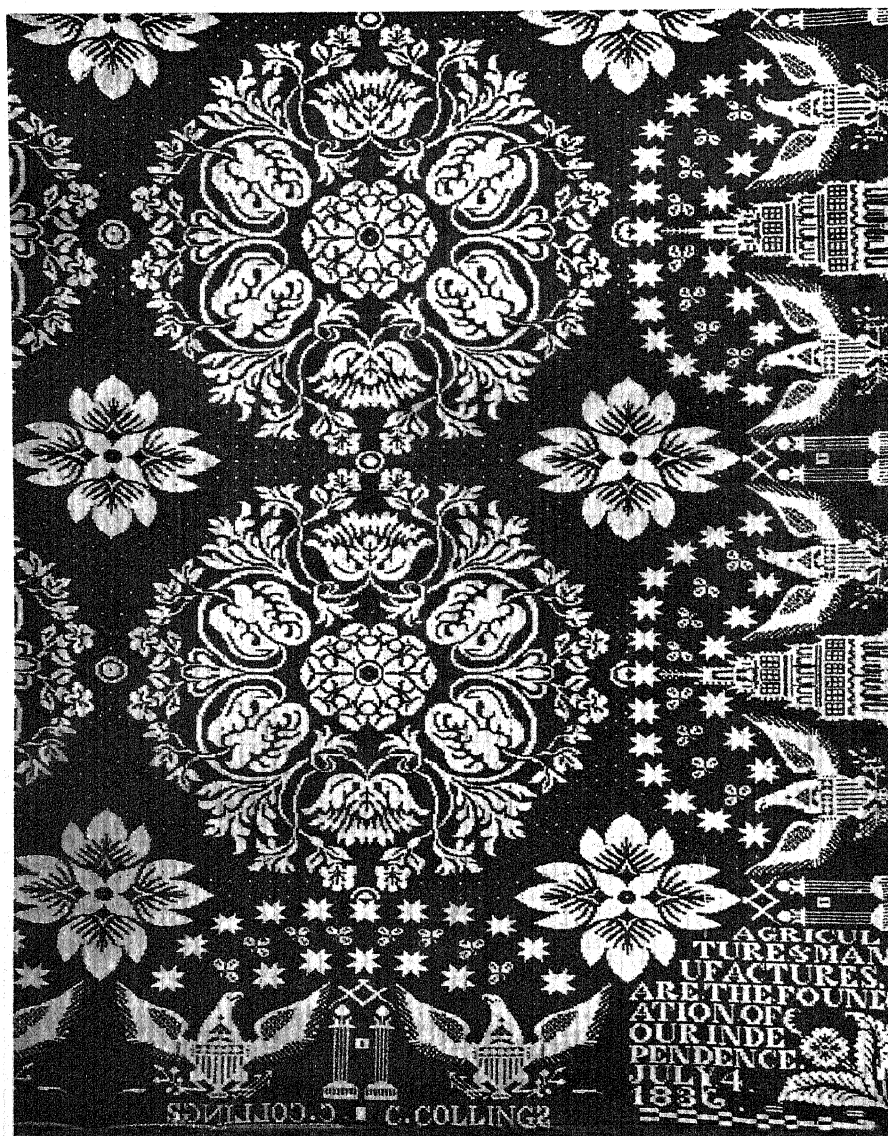
a) THE IDA STILLWELL COVERLET

*Detail from a coverlet in overshoot weave,  
showing the simple geometric  
patterns imposed by a  
four-barness loom*



b) THE WYCKOFF COVERLET

*Detail from a double-cloth coverlet in snowball pattern woven in a Dutch homestead in Flatlands, L.I.  
The top right-hand corner is doubled over to show the reverse side*



JACQUARD COVERLET

*Woven in one piece, this is a good example of the later mechanical weaving on a Jacquard loom. The type is characterized by naturalistic designs, patriotic symbols, and weavers' and family names and dates, generally in the 1840's. [Detail]*

Fig. O

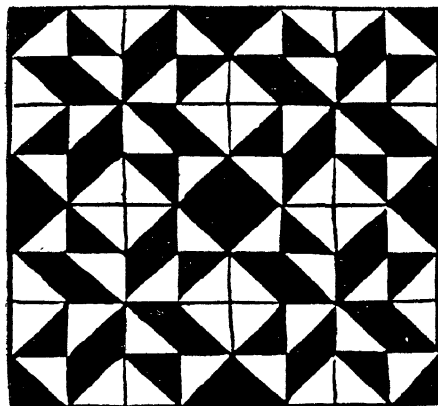
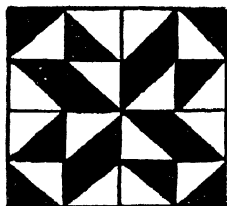


Fig. P

An intriguing and deceptive four-patch is the Barbara Frietchie Star (Fig. O). Deceptive because it appears at first glance to be intricate, it is composed of sixteen squares, cut diagonally and pieced in contrasting color—as in Fig L. Where two dark triangles meet to form the long diamond-shaped patch, it can be cut as one patch if desired. So, too, may be cut the white triangles where they come together on each of the four sides of the block. A matter of preference. A red and white pin-dot print pieced with deep blue or plain white is suggested for this design. Fig. P shows four blocks set together. All-over geometric patterns may be carried right out to the edge of a quilt and do not require a border; when a border is used, a perfectly plain one frames the pieced composition more effectively than a pieced or otherwise decorated one.

Fig. Q

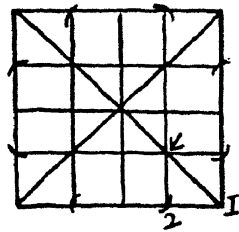
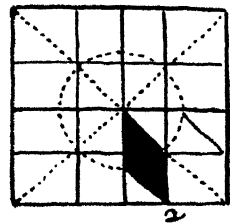


Fig. R



An eight-point star known to quiltmakers as the Star of Le Moyne (or "lemon star" to the plain folk of olden times) is so beautiful and lends itself to so many variations it is well worth study and effort in order to be able to draft it according to preferred size. To obtain the proper proportions for the unit diamond, eight of which make the star, it is necessary to draw the whole star.

First draw the square the size of the planned star. Quarter it with a horizontal and a vertical line. Draw diagonal lines from corner to corner. Place compass foot at lower right-hand corner (1, Fig. Q), and measure distance with point of compass (pencil) to exact center; keep compass set at this angle and mark the same distance from each corner twice on each outer line of the square connecting the marks with four lines drawn as in Fig. Q. Set foot of compass again at exact center and place point of compass (pencil) to connecting lines indicated by small arrow. Keep compass at this angle and describe circle as shown in Fig. R. From the exact center to the arrow gives one side of the diamond unit; from the center to the point where the circle intersects dividing lines gives a second side to the diamond unit; from the arrow to (2) gives a third side; from (2) back to circle intersection gives the fourth side. All four sides of the diamond unit must be equal in length. (See Fig. R.) Eight unit diamond-shaped pieces seamed together make the Le Moyne Star shown in Fig. S; there must be true squares in each corner and true right-angled spaces on each of the four sides.

Fig. T shows each diamond unit divided in quarters; it is pieced by alternating colors concentrically. In other words, the colors radiate in rows from the center. The Star of Bethlehem, the Rising Sun, or Lone Star, different names for the same large star that is built with many

Fig. S

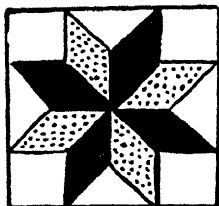
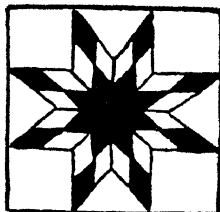


Fig. T



diamond-divisions to each of its eight diamond-shaped points, and the smaller pieced stars known as the Ship's Wheel or Harvest Sun, along with many of the Pieced Lily and Peony patterns—all are formed on the same principle. In the larger compositions the corner squares and the right angles usually are filled in with decorative appliqué work or quilting stitchery.

◇ ◇ ◇ BORDERS ◇ ◇ ◇

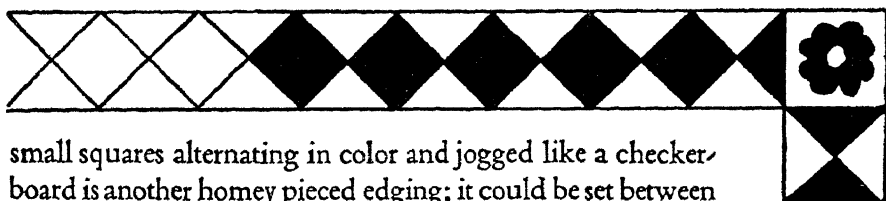
The border does for a quilt what the frame does for a picture. It should be appropriate in both cases. Lustrous white broadcloth cut five, six or seven inches wide and finished with mitered corners is unexcelled as a background for distinguished quilting; for the quilter less sure of her skill, a six- to eight-inch-wide border of floral chintz or patterned percale would be a happy and simple solution for the finish of almost any quilt. But pieced borders have an appeal and perhaps the Saw Tooth patch border was the most popular of all. It is simply a row of squares (one inch square to four inches square, depending on plan) with each square cut in half diagonally and pieced together again, one triangle light, the other dark, and placed along the edge of the quilt so all dark edges are turned to the outside (Fig.U). When a white strip is placed between two rows

Fig. U



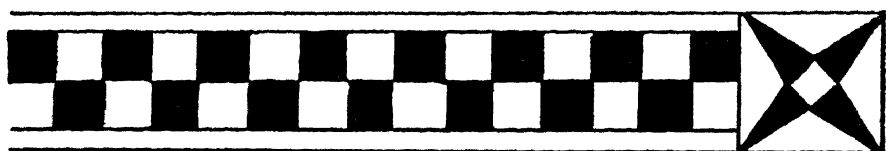
of Saw Tooth patches, dark edges turned outward, it is a pleasing frame for almost any pieced or appliqué'd spread. Chained Squares is another old favorite, simple but not ordinary; it is made of two pieces, a square and a quarter-square, set together as shown in Fig. W. A double row of

*Fig. W*



small squares alternating in color and jogged like a checker-board is another homey pieced edging; it could be set between two narrow strips of plain color to give the pattern emphasis (Fig. Y). The Wild Goose Chase (Fig. Z) is a pieced classic as well-liked in borders as when made in strips that form an entire quilt. It is said

*Fig. Y*



that in American folk art triangles represent birds; this may be so for there are a number of patterns made entirely of triangles that bear names pertaining to feathered creatures—*Birds-in-the-air*, *Hens and Chickens*, *Winged Square*, *Hovering Hawks* and many others. Appliqué borders are more at home on spreads of their kind, though an undulant vine (easy to do in natural waves with a bias fold) with attached buds or small flowers and leaves (cut patterns from natural petals and leaves gathered in the garden or the florist's) might happily set off a rather severe central geometric plan. A feeling for design and good taste must guide the decision. Restraint is better than exuberance for the inexperienced unless a model is being reproduced or a tried pattern is being followed.

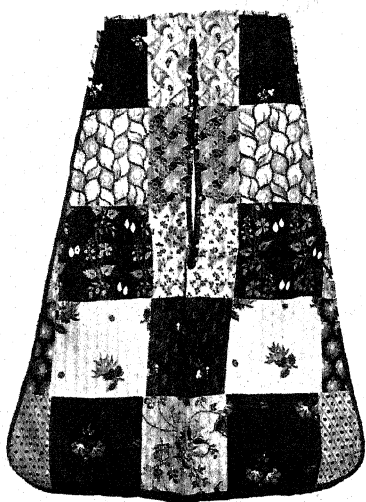
Be sure edges of the quilt are even before attaching border; if the pieced or appliqué'd squares have been set into the quilt diagonally, pieced or



THE QUILTING PARTY

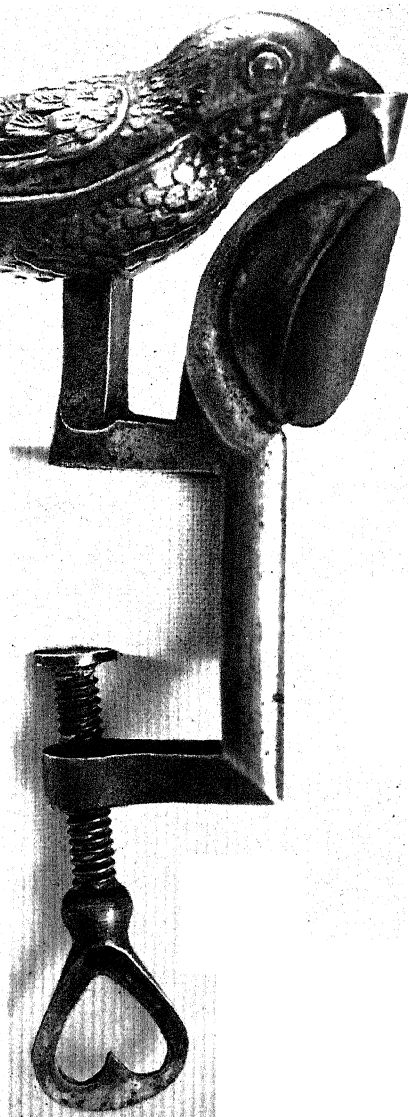
*From a painting by an unknown artist (1840-50), this picture captures the spirit of a quilting party where the load of housework was made lighter by community co-operation*






a) SEWER'S "POCKET"

*Tied about the waist, this 18th-century patchwork "pocket" was worn like an apron, only slightly to the right side. Backed with homespun, the outer layer was supplied with a bound slit or opening, making the garment really a pocket in which the seamstress or quiltmaker could keep her thread, needlecase, scissors, patterns or spectacles, and have them always at hand when needed*



b) BRASS SEWING BIRD

*The Bird screws to the edge of the table and its beak holds the cloth taut while the sewer hems or seams*

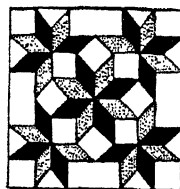


appliqué'd half-squares must fill in the right-angled spaces along all the edges of the quilt. The modern quilt usually

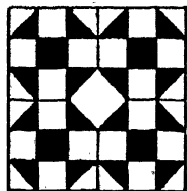
◆◆◆ QUILTING ◆◆◆

◆ 59 ◆

In every quilting community one woman specializes in marking, an art in itself, and the owner pays separately for her service. Favorite or traditional patterns may be requested but an experienced marker may be trusted to select a complementary design for every patchwork pattern and the proper fill-in for all odd spaces. The top is marked for quilting before it is assembled into the frames.



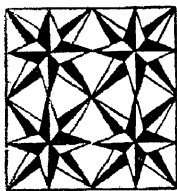
On the other hand many women feel that they would like to see the job through, to point with pride at the end and be able to say: "I did all of it—even the quilting!" The most serious drawback to this ambition is lack of space in most modern homes for a frame large enough to accommodate a full-size quilt. Quilting frames have two horizontal bars about nine feet long and two vertical bars about four feet long. The bars are approximately two inches wide and the same deep; they are held together at each of the four corners with clamps. The frame, always set so the corners make true right angles, may rest on chair backs while the work is in progress. All bars of the frame should have strips of sturdy tape or ticking tacked along their entire lengths. The lining or backing of the quilt (cut several inches larger than the quilt top to allow for possible stretching of the top or for fraying) is placed in first by basting the edges to ticking on long sides of the frame and pinning it to the ticking on the shorter sides; the quilt will be rolled on the longer sides. Stretch and clamp. When the lining is taut the cotton batting is spread evenly and at the desired thickness. One bat is sufficient for a full-sized quilt. The patchwork top is then placed over all and its edges are basted to the edges of the lining at all sides, smoothing and stretching as the basting is being done. Here is where uneven piecing may cause embarrassment; if the puckers are not too bad quilting may take care of them. Start to



Shoo Fly

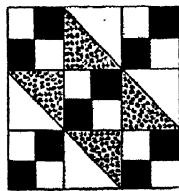
quilt from either side; remove pins as necessary, loosen clamps and roll work under as the quilting progresses.

Now comes what one quiltmaker calls the "frosting on the cake." One expert quilter, when asked for her recipe for fine quilting, said: "It cannot be learned by reading—only by doing. Steady nerves, pleasant temperament,



equal dexterity with either hand, an inborn sense of line and form, Job's patience and time galore." For actual technique the testimony is interestingly contradictory. One school of thought declares the only way to quilt is in two separate movements, one stitch downwards, the next upwards, through all three thicknesses, the needle being guided by the forefinger—which becomes sore with pricking. An expert whose lovely quilts have taken many prizes avers she always quilts in a running stitch, two little stitches at a time, and, moreover, does her quilting *without a frame!* Some quilters use a long needle and discard it as soon as it gets bent; others treasure their bent needles and can use no others; still others attribute their fine work to the advantages of a short needle! Nor do experts agree on where the quilting should be placed; some follow the outlines of both appliqué and pieced patterns which brings the design into relief, while others quilt right through patchwork using diamonds, squares or circles for all-over quilting. There are quilters who say geometrical patchwork should be off-set with curved lines in the quilting and that curved appliqué motifs should be backgrounded with straight lines. There is much room for individual expression and there probably is no hard-and-fast rule except that confusion should be avoided. If the patchwork by gaiety of color and intricacy of pattern commands immediate attention of the eye, it would seem advisable for the quilting to be complementary—something to set off the design, not fight with it for first place in the attention.

There is evidence that beautiful quilting is being done today on what old-time quiltmakers would have dubbed "makeshift" frames. There is an M-style frame on the market which exposes only about two feet of the quilt at one time; it can be disconnected and stored and is thus perfectly adapted to small homes and apartments. There have been excellent quilting jobs done on hoops. One secret for successful quilting done in the lap or on hoops is basting and more basting—up and down, and across and diagonally—to keep the three layers of cloth from shifting while being handled. One quilter likes first to wind her hoops



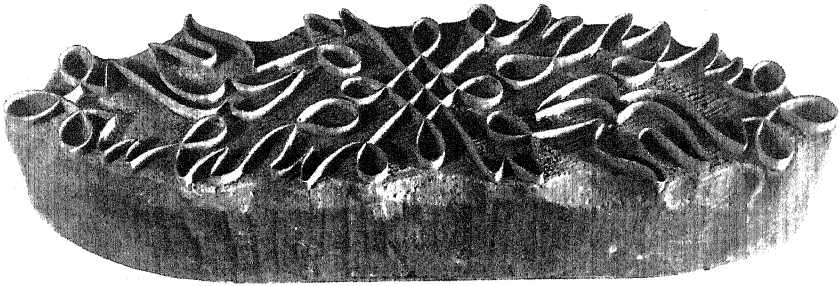
Jacob's Ladder

with tape or some sturdy material and pin down firmly the section of the quilt on which the quilting is being done.

Here is still another way to quilt without frames: Pad each unit block lightly and cut lining to fit; baste together, mark for quilting, quilt and bind each unit with desired color. When all the blocks for the entire top are finished in this way, set them together with fine whipping stitches, using strong thread; the finished quilt has the same pleasing effect of lattice-work and it is seen on both sides—face and reverse. Variation: Pad each unit patch block and back it with thin material; quilt; add extra padding where desired by pushing bits of cotton through the thin material with needle-head or bodkin. Join the quilted units together by seaming, using backstitch; press seams open; spread lining (cut in squares to fit the patches) under sections and baste. Blind-stitch the lining squares to matching divisions of the face and quilt through on the joining lines. In this procedure there will be a pattern of squares but no ornamental quilting stitchery on the reverse side. Both suggestions are worth consideration for lap quilting. As one of our wise old forebears would have put it—"There's more ways than one to skin a cat". The beginner might try quilting a crib quilt or any small item first, to get the "feel" of quilting—it is unlike any other needlework.

## ◆◆◆ BINDING ◆◆◆

To finish: Take quilt out of frame and bind with bias band of material either white or of predominant color in quilt. The binding should be cut on the true bias and should measure an inch or an inch and a half wide. Stitch to wrong side of quilt, fold over double and whip down to face of quilt with small stitches. Antique quilts often were finished by having the backing (cut a little larger all around to allow for this) brought over to the face, folded over and felled down. Other antique spreads were finished with hand-loomed tape in a variety of weaves and colors designed to match the quilt it was to bind. Another interesting finish shows an eight-inch piping of contrasting color set into the binding along the line where



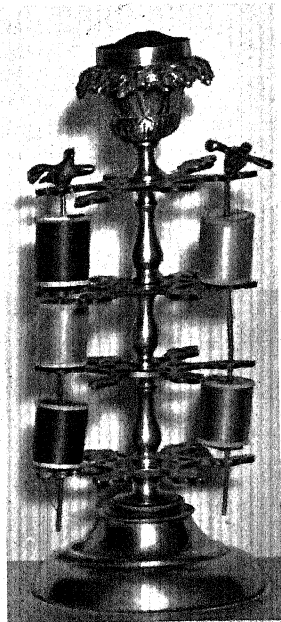
a) PRINTING BLOCK

*Used primarily for block-printing fabrics, this type of wooden block, into which a design in pewter has been impressed or set, was also employed by quilters in marking a design to be quilted*



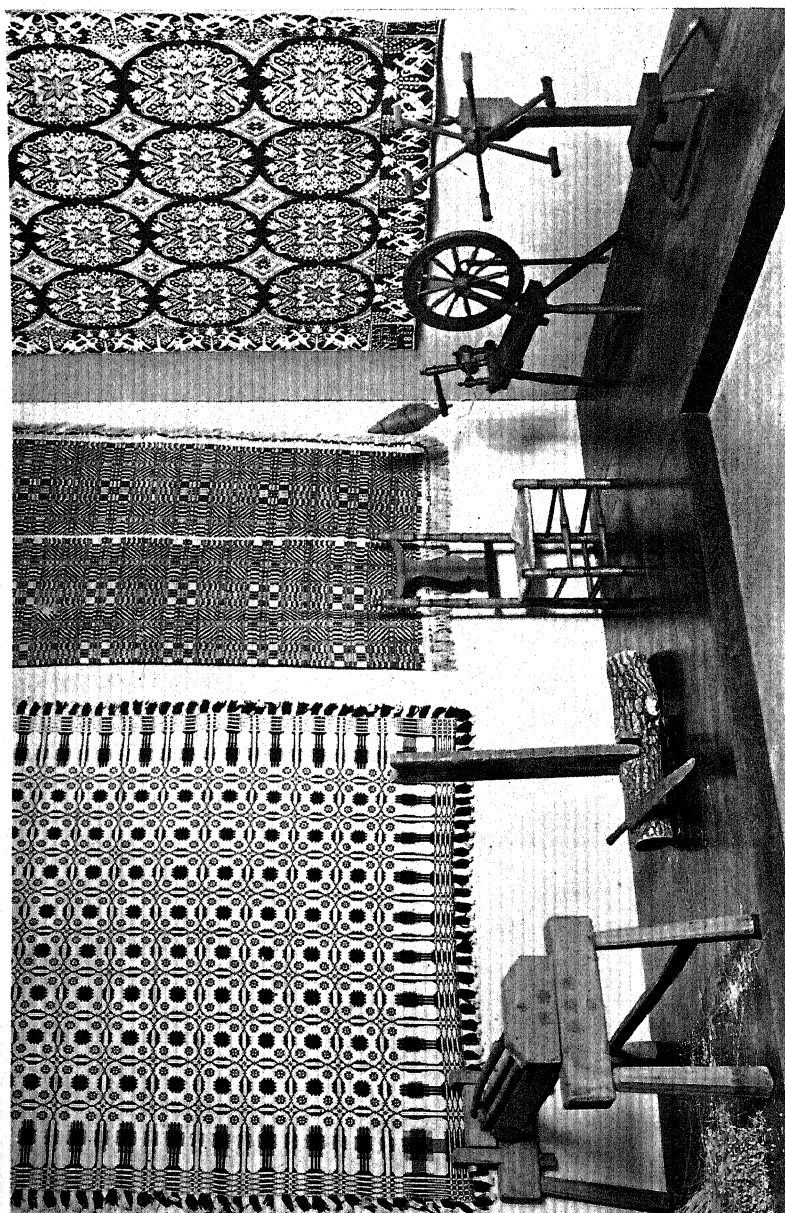
b) BALL PINCUSHION

*This white satin ball pincushion, three inches in diameter, was embroidered in exquisite detail by a Berks County needleworker sometime before 1797. The bird and flower sprays suggest the decorations on the family fraktur scripts*



c) SPOOL REEL

*Seven inches high, made of brass, and crowned with a velvet pincushion, this spool reel holds 18 spools of thread*



FLAX BREAK

SWINGING BLOCK

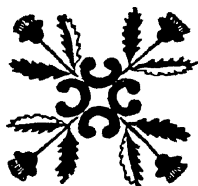
FLAX

SHAKER

*Woven coverlets on wall, from left to right:  
Double woven type Snowball with Pine Tree border. Double Bow-knot—overshot weave. Double woven type—Jacquard loom—dated 1834*

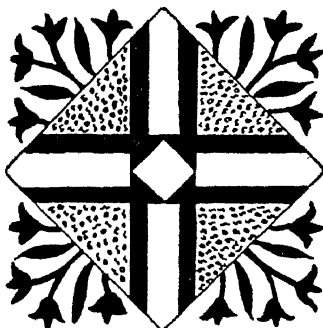
it is felled down to the face. On some antique quilts the edges of both back and face were turned toward the center and then whipped together although this method did not make a durable edge. White spreads and sometimes those of patchwork were finished with a hand-knotted fringe; this can be done either by hooking yarn through the edge of the material with a crotchet hook and knotting each strand or group of threads to make a single or a double row of knots, or it may be done by hooking yarn through a gimp or a narrow crocheted base, knotting the strands, and then whipping the finished fringe to the edge of the already bound quilt. The method used in finishing edges is a contributing factor in determining the age of an heirloom spread.

Now the quilt is finished and should it happily escape the ignominy of being locked away in a chest (use a quilt and love it!), it will bring cheer to the best bedchamber and perhaps acclaim for its creator.



*Thistles*





*Tulip Baskets*

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